ΘΕΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ,
OR THE
Divine Government
Of NATIONS
CONSIDERED and IMPROVED.

IN A
DISCOURSE
TO THE
SOCIETIES
FOR
Reformation of Manners
IN
London and *Middlesex.*

Preached on Monday *May* 15. 1699.

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Published at their Request.

The Second Edition.

London, Printed for *Andrew Bell*, at the Cross-keys and Bible in *Cornhil*, 1700.

TO THE KING'S Most Excellent Majesty.

May it please your Majesty,

IT *is from no Ambition to be taken notice of, but from a sincere and hearty Concern for the Publick Welfare, that I make bold to entitle this small Piece to so Great and*

Illuſtrious a Patron. The ſame ſenſe of Duty that oblig'd me to yield to the Deſire of the Societies for Reformation, both in preaching and publiſhing this Sermon, hath prevailed with me to put it into Your Royal Hands, That you may be pleas'd, as the True Father of Your People, to encourage the Deſign and End it aims at, which is no leſs then a National Good.

The Supream Providence hath honoured Your Majeſty, as by many Marks of his Favour, ſo by this, That theſe Societies were born in the beginning of Your Auſpicious Reign. And, as they had their Riſe with it, and have grown up ſince under the benign Influences thereof; ſo they do ſtill encourage themſelves in the hope of Your Majeſty's continued Protection: the Glory of God and the Honour and Safety of the Go-

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vernment and Nation, being the only things they propose to carry on in a legal and peaceable way.

All Human Governments, especially Regular Monarchies, are Pictures of the Divine; but Your Majesty's is most eminently so. For, as you are both the Deliverer and Choice of the Nations you govern; so you rule them as reasonable Creatures and a Free People, giving Liberty to all, but allowing Licentiousness to none.

Your Majesty's recommending Reformation so frequently and pathetically, both in your Speeches to your Parliaments and Proclamations to your Subjects, that the Laws might be put in due execution against open Wickedness, doth fully assure us, that it is none of the least of your Regal Cares and Heroical Designs, to raise the Genius of your People by bettering their Morals.

Dedication.

This is indeed an Attempt worthy of such a Monarch; the Prosecution and Accomplishment of which will further characterise your Majesty both as Good and Great, and lay a just Foundation of Your being particularly known by the Title of Defender of the Faith. And it is the constant and earnest Prayer of your best Subjects, that you may be as prosperous in Peace, in conquering intestine Vices and Impieties, as You were Glorious in War, against foreign Enemies: That thus your Royal Example and Influence may render the Endeavours of good Men this way more diffusive and successful, as well as stir up others to concur in this honourable and necessary Work, which still requires more hands.

The Design therefore of this small Essay being to give such an account of Theocraty or the Divine Government of Nati-

Nations, as might incite to, and assist towards the promoting so noble an end: I was emboldned to address Your Majesty after this manner, leaving the Subject and Scope to apologize for the Defects of the Performance.

May the Divine Goodness long preserve your Sacred Person and Precious Life, in Mercy to Europe *and the World, and for the Good and Peace of this Kingdom and your other Dominions. May you ever grow and encrease in Happiness and Glory; honoured by your Allies, beloved by your Subjects, dreaded by your Enemies, and valued by all Men. May Success ever answer, and even exceed your Wishes, and true and lasting Fame enlighten Posterity with the Lustre of your Name and Glory of Your Actions: and of these may not only our present Deliverance and Peace, but the future Settle-*

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ment and Security of these Kingdoms, be an eternal Monument. And may God, when he removes you from us (and oh! may it be late!) reward your Cares and Labours with endless Felicity and Joy, and give you the Crown of Glory in exchange for your earthly Diadem. So prayeth,

Great SIR,

Your Majesty's most Humbly Devoted,

and most Obedient Subject,

Robert Fleming.

Jer. XVIII Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: If that Nation againſt whom I have pronounced, this, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to build and to plant it: If it do evil in my ſight, that it obey not my Voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I ſaid I would benefit them.

Now therefore go to, ſpeak to the Men of Judah, *and to the Inhabitants of* Jeruſalem, *ſaying, Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold I frame Evil againſt you, and deviſe a Device againſt you: Return ye now every one from his evil Way, and make your Ways and your Doings good.*

THERE is hardly any Principle of Argumentation, from whence Purity of Life, and Reformation of Manners may not be urg'd and enforc'd. For whether we conſider natural or revealed Religion; whether we think of God, our ſelves, or others; whether we reflect on Man apart, or in relation to Society, as to their Peace here, or Happineſs hereafter; ſtill we may by an eaſy

Inference find our thoughts terminate on Reformation and Piety, as a thing excellent in it ſelf, and beneficial to Men; the very naming of which is enough to raviſh the Souls of good Men, and to ſerve Convictions on the Conſciences of the Wicked.

Therefore tho this Subject has been excellently diſcourſed of already, and preſt from ſeveral of theſe Topicks, there is no fear of exhauſting ſo copious and diffuſed an Argument, which like the Widow's Oil will be found to increaſe and run over, as long as there are Souls to receive its Ideas, or Mouths to impart them to others.

But this Conſideration dos rather overwhelm than eaſe my Mind, which finds it ſelf ſo unequally match'd in attempting, tho at your deſire, to ſpeak of this Subject: For it is not the littleneſs but greatneſs of any thing that ſtraitens a Man's Thoughts, by diſſipating or ſwallowing them up; ſo that when he has moſt to ſay, he can oft ſay leaſt. Hence it is we are told ſo pathetically in Scripture, how unable we are to comprehend God, whom we can as little graſp in our Minds as we can the Sea in the hollow of our Hands. And from hence the Apoſtle *John* aſſures us, that if all had been written of Chriſt which the Matter was capable of, the World had been confounded with voluminous and endleſs Writings; and the Books that have been compoſed ſince his time make good his Hyperbole, if indeed it be one.

Iſa. 40. Job 11. 7, 8, 9. Joh. 21. *ult.*

While therefore I conſidered the vaſtneſs of the Subject I was deſired to recommend and urge at this time, and call'd to mind *Solomon's* Complaint, that he found Study tireſom, and Books endleſs, tho his Soul was of the largeſt

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Size and ſtrongeſt Make that ever Man's was: I could not but conclude it neceſſary for me, ſo to accommodate my ſelf to this Point, as to preſs it from one Topick only. Tho even in this I ſeem to have undertaken too great a Task, in propoſing to conſider and repreſent unto you in ſo ſhort time, the Divine Providence as preſiding over and governing Kingdoms and Nations, in order thence to incite you to publick and univerſal Reformation of Manners,

I ſhall not therefore trouble you, nor ſpend any part of our little time in angling for ſmall Shreds of Truth by barren Critciſms upon the Words: tho I ſhould have reckon'd it of uſe to conſider theſe, if I had found any thing very material fetch'd from thence, to the Illuſtration of the Text, by any of the Maſters of the Critical Art. But finding that the Septuagint and all other Verſions I had opportunity to peruſe did render the Hebrew with reſpect to Matter and Scope, as our Interpreters do, I thought all my buſineſs was to conſider the Import of the Words as they lie before us, in order to underſtand and improve them.

As an Introduction to this, I ſhall preſent you with the general Scope both of the Text and Context, from the firſt to the eighteenth Verſe of this Chapter; which take as follows.

The Prophet *Jeremiah* having got a general Commiſſion to reprove the Jews for their many Sins, and to threaten them with War, Deſolation and Captivity, if they ſhould continue diſobedient, and not reform and repent, is in this Chapter ſent to the Potter's Houſe to have an emblematical Repreſentation of God's Providence towards Men and Nations. When he

comes, the Wheels are going, and the Potter at work to make such a Vessel as he had prepar'd the Clay for. But it did not answer his purpose and expectation, but is marred in his hands, *i. e.* breaks or cracks, or is not ductile to his mind: Therefore he takes another Method, and casts the Clay into a new Form, and makes thereof another kind of Vessel, as seemed good to himself to make it. Then says God, "Lo "here *Jeremiah*, thou hast an Hieroglyphick of "my Providence in relation to Kingdoms and "Nations; therefore go to the People of *Israel*, "and tell them in my name, that I may be "justly supposed to have as much, yea vastly "more right and power to dispose of them, who "are but brittle and Clay Vessels of my own "making, than the Potter has over his Clay. "I can mend or mar, make or break them, as "well as he his Vessels. But because they are "endowed with thinking and immortal Souls, "tell them that I shall carry it towards them "accordingly; and that therefore I will not "deal with them by way of absolute Power, "but my soveraign Providence shall be manag-"ed by the Rules of an exact Equity temper'd "with Goodness, that the Justice of my Proce-"dure may appear to all, and even to themselves. "For, however they shall behave themselves, my "design is to carry it so, *That I may be justifi-*
Psl. 51. 4. "*ed by all, as to the Equity of my Words and De-*"*clarations, and that I may appear to be pure*
"*and clear from any suspition of Cruelty and Ri-*"*gour when I shall judg them for their Actions.*

"I do therefore give them this plain De-"claration of my Providence: That when at "any time I threaten a Nation with destructi-

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" on and ruin; if that Nation reform and re-
" pent before it be too late, I will ſpare it and
" not deſtroy it. And on the other hand, when
" I bleſs a Nation with many and ſingular Mer-
" cies and Privileges; if that Nation requite
" my kindneſs no otherwiſe than by Diſobedi-
" ence and Rebellion, I will change the courſe
" of my Providence, and bring miſery and de-
" ſolation upon them.

" Go therefore *Jeremiah*, and tell the Men
" of *Judah* and Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, that
" this being the ſettled and ordinary Law by
" which I govern Nations, they ought to make
" a wiſe Application thereof to themſelves: For
" let them not plead exemption from Puniſh-
" ment upon the account of their Special Pri-
" vileges; for I aſſure them that I deſign ſeve-
" rely to puniſh them, unleſs they ſet about a
" National Reformation, and turn from their
" evil Ways and Courſes.

" However, let them not deſpair when they
" ſee Miſeries ready to break in upon them, as
" if there was no hope: for were I not deſi-
" rous to ſpare them, I would not be at all this
" pains to ſhew them their Duty and Intereſt.
" Argue therefore with them further thus: O
" ye *Jews*, is it not an unaccountable thing, that
" ye ſhould act at this rate? It is as if a Man
" ſhould chooſe to dwell in a parched De-
" ſert, rather than inhabit a pleaſant and irri-
" guate Soil: For ye have thrown off the only
" true God, your conſtant Benefactor and Pro-
" tector, and have worſhipped lifeleſs and ſenſe-
" leſs Deities, that can neither hear nor help.
" And inſtead of walking in the ways of ho-
" lineſs and obedience, ye have broken all the

" Fences I ſet you, and run into forbidden Cour-
" ſes. Tell them therefore that by this way they
" draw down miſery on their own heads, to the
" ruin of their Country, and the making them-
" ſelves the laughing-ſtock of the Gentiles, by
" forcing me to become their Enemy, and to
" puniſh them with Captivity and Deſolation.

This Account of the Meaning and Scope of the firſt ſeventeen Verſes of this Chapter, I thought fit to premiſe, which may ſerve as a Paraphraſe upon them, and be an Introduction to the Diſcourſe I propoſe to entertain you with, from the words I have read.

My Text naturally divides it ſelf into theſe *two Parts* or *General Heads*: Firſt, *The Account God himſelf gives of the ordinary Method of his Providence in governing Nations and Kingdoms.* Secondly, *The Application of this Account to the Jews, with relation to their particular Caſe and Circumſtances.*

PART I.

The Account God gives of the ordinary Method of his Providence in governing Nations and Kingdoms.

I perceive I am got upon a large and diffuſed Field of Matter, where, if I take not good heed, I may both miſtake my own way, and miſlead the thoughts of others. Providence is a dark and myſterious Labyrinth, whoſe Mazes and Meanders, Turnings and Windings, none did ever yet, in all reſpects, ſucceſſively diſcover and lay open: So that it ſeems to be the work of Chriſt himſelf and not of meer Men, the work of Eternity and not of Time, to adjuſt

juſt the many ſeeming Diſcords thereof in one great Harmony. I ſhall therefore venture no farther into the Receſſes of this Subject, than my Text will give me leave; eſpecially conſidering that I am confined to the narrow limits of one ſingle Diſcourſe, and that this is not the only thing I muſt ſpeak to therein.

Having therefore already given you a general Idea of the meaning and ſcope of the Words read, I ſhall from thence propoſe to your Meditations the ſeveral Conſiderations of the Theocraty, or Divine Government of Nations, in ſome Propoſitions, which I ſhall endeavour to propoſe in ſuch a Gradation of thought, that your minds may be inſenſibly led from one to another.

Prop. I. *As God is the Ruler of all things, ſo he is in a ſpecial manner the Rector of Men, whom he governs as reaſonable Creatures.*

Every Effect ſuppoſes a Cauſe, and every Work a Workman; and therefore the Notion of Creatures involves the belief of a Creator. And Work of ſuch a nature as this vaſt and admirably contrived World, muſt needs lead us to this Concluſion, that the Author is infinitely wiſe, powerful and good: For, as the Apoſtle ſays, *The inviſible things of God, even his eternal Power and Godhead, are clearly underſtood by the things that are ſeen.* And this belief of God leads neceſſarily to the faith of a Providence. For ſurely it is as eaſy for an infinitely powerful and wiſe Being to govern as to make the World. And it is not conſiſtent with his Goodneſs to ſuffer inferior Beings which he gave Origin unto, to be without all Government and Rule. To talk of Chance therefore as the Ma- Rom. 1. 20.

ker or Ruler of the Univerſe, is to ſpeak words that have no ſenſe in them. Is this Chimera we call Chance ſomething or nothing? If nothing; can nothing be a Cauſe of real Effects? If ſomething; dos it act regularly or irregularly? If regularly; then it is no more Chance? If irregularly; how can it produce a regular and uniform World? Can there be more in the Effect than the Cauſe could impart to it? And if the uniform Courſe of the Sun and other Luminaries, the preſervation of the Species of Creatures, and in ſhort, the Courſe of Nature for five thouſand years, prove not the Regularity of the World, we muſt for ever ceaſe to reaſon upon any thing in this Life. Therefore we may be aſſured the ſame God governs the World who made it; and that this *his Kingdom of Providence ruleth over all.*

Pſal. 103. 19.

And ſuch is the Divine Goodneſs, that he reckons nothing which he made beneath his Care; which is no more difficult to him, than to govern any one thing, if we have any due Conception of his infinite Perfections. Hence the Scripture tells us, *That he makes his Winds blow as he pleaſeth:* That *he gives Life or takes it away as he ſees good;* and that *he gives food to all Creatures, Birds, Beaſts, and Fiſhes, who all depend upon his Bounty for their proviſion.*

Joh. 3. 8. Pſal. 104. 29. Pſal. 104. 17, 21, 27, 28.

But his Providence takes a more ſpecial Care of the Children of Men, whom he governs in another manner, than the inanimate or brutiſh part of the Creation; and diſdains not to be known by the Title of, *The Preſerver of Men.* For, not to pry into the unknown and inviſible Orbs and Regions, *he hath given this Earth to the Children of Men, and all the Creatures there-*

Job. 7. 20. Pſal. 115. 16.

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in to ſubſerve their uſe. But Men themſelves he has made to be his Subjects to ſerve and obey him; and therefore has brought them under a Law and the Sanction thereof, by promiſes of Rewards and threatnings of Puniſhments, as they ſhall be found to behave themſelves. And *his eyes are over them continually*, to obſerve their Proceedings. So certain is this, that the Apoſtle confirms the belief of the Being of God from the Conſideration of his Providence: Tho *God*, ſays he, *in times paſt ſuffered all Nations to walk in their own ways; yet he left not himſelf without witneſs, in that he did good, and gave us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seaſons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladneſs.* And from this Topic the Pſalmiſt attempts to convince wicked Men of the folly of their Imagination, that God did not mind things below, or take notice of their Oppreſſion and Villany. *They break in pieces thy People, O Lord, and afflict thine Heritage. They ſlay the Widow and the Stranger, and afflict the Fatherleſs: Yet they ſay, The Lord ſhall not ſee, neither ſhall the God of* Jacob *regard it. Underſtand ye brutiſh among the People; and ye Fools when will ye be wiſe? He that planteth the Ear, ſhall he not hear? He that formed the Eye, ſhall he not ſee?* &c.

Pſal. 8. 6, 7, 8. Prov. 5. 21. & 15. 3. Act. 14. 16, 17. Pſal. 94. 5. 6, 7, 8, &c.

Prob. II. *God doth not only govern Men conſidered particularly and apart, but as they coaleſce into Societies, and conſtitute and make up diſtinct Kingdoms and Nations.*

This is ſo plain and perſpicuous in our Text, that I need alledg nothing further by way of Probation. And what are the Kingdoms and Nations of this World, but ſo many Provinces under

under the care of a wiſe God, who reigns over them as Univerſal Monarch? If one Man ſometimes has been capable to rule many and far diſtant Nations, many of whom never ſaw him, nor expected ever to ſee him, and yet obeyed voluntarily, which was the Caſe of *Cyrus*; ſurely it need be thought no ſtrange thing for God to rule all Nations. He is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, and all Princes and Rulers are but his Viceroys, and Officers under him, who act by his Commiſſion, and are accountable to him for their management. *He rules over all the Kingdoms of the World, and in his hand there is Power and Might, ſo that none is able to withſtand him; and he diſpoſeth of all Nations as he ſees good.*

Κύρου παιδ. Xenoph. lib. 1.

1 Tim. 6. 15.

2 Chron. 20. 6.

And ſurely there is all reaſon that he that made the World ſhould govern it: For he only is and can be the Soveraign thereof. And to none elſe can abſolute Power and Authority belong; it being the higheſt Uſurpation and Treaſon for any Mortal to claim this, as well as impoſſible that he ſhould be poſſeſſed of it; for he that is qualified to rule abſolutely, muſt have as a right and juſt Title to this Power, ſo alſo all Vertues compleat and perfect in himſelf, without the leaſt Allay or Imperfection. He muſt be the moſt gracious and merciful, the moſt juſt and faithful, the moſt wiſe and knowing, the moſt powerful and mighty of all Beings. In a word, he muſt be *Optimus Maximus*, the beſt and the greateſt. Now is there any beſides the infinite God that is poſſeſſed of all theſe Perfections? Is there any Man that knows all things, or can do all things? is there any Man infinite or unchangeable?

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For a Man then to make himſelf Abſolute, is to act over again the madneſs of ſuch a frantick Perſon as *Caligula*, who commanded all to worſhip him as God. And ſurely it muſt needs be the higheſt Madneſs to uſurp that which he can never reach or attain: For let him do what he can, he can never make himſelf independent, unlimited or infinite. Sueton. in Vita ejus. Philo Jud. in Legatione ad eum.

And as none but God can pretend to Arbitrary Authority and Power: ſo no Subjects are obliged or ought to obey, meerly becauſe it is ſaid, *ſo we command you*, unleſs in things indifferent: For when God commands one thing, and Rulers another, we muſt ever follow the Apoſtolical practice, and ſay with them, *Whether it be right in the ſight of God to obey you rather than God, judg ye.* Act. 4. 19.

It is God then whom Kingdoms and Nations ought to obey as their Soveraign Ruler and Abſolute Judg; whoſe Commands being ſealed with a *Thus ſaith the Lord*, ought to be obeyed without farther Debate. It is he only who knows the Soul and its Secrets, who gives Laws to the inward as well as outward part, and executes Judgment impartially to all his Subjects.

But in a Conſiſtency with the Laws of Reaſon and Revelation alſo, where it is ſuperadded, all are obliged to ſubmit to the Laws made by Men for the good of the Community. For to live without all Rule and Law is as ridiculous, as for a Man to commit himſelf and all he has to the impetuous Sea and its inconſtant Waves, in a Ship without either Steerage, Compaſs, Sails or Oars. Licentiouſneſs indeed is often miſtaken for Liberty. But if it muſt go under that name, yet it is only a Liberty to err, to be mad and

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to be miſerable. Anarchy as it is the worſt of Tyrannies, ſo it is a thing in vain attempted, in the full ſenſe of the Word: For had we none in this World to be ſummoned before, yet there is a Law in ourſelves to which we are accountable; a Conſcience that accuſeth or excuſeth us as we live and act. *Juvenal* * therefore tells his Friend that he was not to think that thoſe eſcap'd all Puniſhment, who were not called to an account for their Villanies by human Judicatories; for that ſuch Mens Conſciences tormented them as much as all Racks and Tortures could do.

Prop. III. *The Fundamental Law and Inſtrument of God's Kingdom over Men, whereby he governs them both apart and as they conſtitute and make up diſtinct Nations, is the Conception and Impreſſion Men have of Religion as to its Principles and Obligations.*

Tho God be our Abſolute Soveraign and Lord, and might thus juſtly require of us whatever he pleaſeth; yet ſuch is his Condeſcenſion and Goodneſs, that he chooſeth to govern Men as free and rational Creatures, by commanding nothing but what is agreeable to their Natures, and makes for their own Intereſt in conjunction with his Honour. He gives therefore ſome notices of his Being and Beneficence to all Na-

* —— ——Cur tamen hos tu
Evaſiſſe putis, quos diri conſcia facti
Mens habet attonitos, & ſurdo verbere cædit,
Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum?
Pœna autem vehemens ac multo ſævior illis,
Quas & Cæditius gravis invenit & Rhadamanthus,
Nocte dieq; ſuum geſtare in pectore teſtem.
Juven. Sat. 13.

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tions, and thereby leads their Thoughts into the Notion and Conception of what we call Religion, impreſſing their Souls with Apprehenſions of its main Principles and Scope: Tho in this he acts variouſly, leaving ſome to the bare conduct of Reaſon and Dictates of Conſcience, and affording others an expreſs Revelation of his Will, and that variouſly alſo according to the Circumſtances of Men in the World, and their different Capacities. But in all this he acts wiſely and mercifully both, requiring no further Improvement than in proportion to the *Talents* lent: For *they that ſin without the Law of an expreſs Revelation, ſhall be judged only by the Dictates of Reaſon and natural Light*: Whereas *they that ſin under the Law ſhall be judged by it; for there is no reſpect of Perſons with God.* Matth. 25. 15, &c. Rom. 2. 11, 12.

The Apoſtle gives us a brief but exact Account both of the Principles and Duties of Religion as ſuch, abſtracting from the conſideration of both the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Economy, in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, *chap.* 11. *ver.* 6. where he tells us, *that he that comes to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek to pleaſe him.* For herein he ſhews us the Principles, Duties and Scope of Religion in one compendious View. *Firſt*, He gives an account of the Principles of Religion, which are five: The 1*ſt* is, *That God is*, or that there is a God. The 2*d* is, That God is the Ruler and Governour of Men: For this is ſufficiently intimated when he is called *a Rewarder of Men.* The 3*d* is, That Man is a needy, dependent and accountable Creature: which is plainly imported when

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it is made his Duty here *to come to God, to ſeek him diligently,* and *to ſtudy to pleaſe him*; and in this alſo that God is ſaid to be *a Rewarder of ſuch as do ſo.* The 4*th* is, That Mens Souls are immortal, or at leaſt that Men ſhall live again after Death: for otherwiſe God cannot be truly ſaid to be a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him, ſince ſuch Perſons do often meet with the worſt Treatment in this preſent Life. The 5*th*, which goes inſeparably along with the preceeding, is, That there is a future ſtate to be expected, where Men will be rewarded or puniſhed according to their deeds. In the *next* place, he propoſes to our Conſideration the *Duties* of Religion. which we are obliged to; *viz.* 1. To believe theſe Principles; and 2. To worſhip and obey God accordingly; which the Apoſtle expreſſes by the Phraſes of *coming to God,* and *ſeeking him.* To which he adds the manner of worſhipping and ſerving God truly, by commanding us to do ſo *diligently.* In the *laſt* place he propoſes the End and Deſign of all Religion, which he repreſents as *a concern and ſtudy to pleaſe God, in order to be rewarded by him.*

This Account of Religion is ſuch, that it leads the Mind to an eaſy and reaſonable Account of it in the general Notion. For I cannot but hence form to my ſelf this plain and conſiſtent Deſcription of it; *viz.* "That it is a ſerious "Concern and ſtudious Endeavour to ſeek after "God, and come unto him, in that way which "we think will be moſt acceptable and pleaſing "to him, and conſequently effectual to reach the "end deſigned; and all this proceeding from a "right apprehenſion, and firm belief of God's

"Being

" Being and Beneficence, and from a juſt ſenſe of
" our dependance upon him, and accountableneſs
" to him, and of our being deſigned for a future
" State, and conſequently of our being to be re-
" warded or puniſhed there, according to our Life
" and Behaviour here, with reſpect to the above-
" mentioned Concern and Endeavour.

And as this is the Idea we muſt neceſſarily have of Religion; ſo we may eaſily perceive hence how reaſonable a thing Religion is: For ſuppoſing the former Principles (which it were eaſy to prove, tho I have now no time for it) is there any thing that can be ſuppoſed more rational than this? Is there an infinite, perfect and glorious Being, whom we call God (a Name that imports ſuch a Being;) Surely then he is to be admired, lov'd, fear'd and obeyed by us. Is he our Creator, and ſhall not his Creatures ſerve him? Is he our Protector, Governor and Benefactor; and ſhall we not ſubject our ſelves to him, and be thankful for what he beſtows upon us? Are we every way depending upon him, as to Being, Life and Action; and ſhall we not have our conſtant recourſe unto him for every thing we need? Has he beſtowed upon us immortal Souls, rational and free Spirits; and ſhall not our Souls, our Thoughts and Wills be employed for him, and in his Service? Are we to be happy or miſerable hereafter, according as we live and behave our ſelves here in this Life; and ſhall we not then labour and ſtudy to act ſo that we may be approved and rewarded by him? So that upon the whole and entire view of all theſe things, we cannot but ſee and own, that Religion is of all things the moſt reaſonable, and is therefore by the Apoſtle Rom. 12. 1. juſtly called our reaſonable Service. And

And ſurely it muſt be reaſonable, ſince it was con-created with Man at firſt, and interwoven with his very Nature: for he was made in the Image of God. And when Religion gets again the Aſcendant over the Soul, whereby this Image is renewed in us, we find it to be every way adapted to the Faculties of our Souls. Unto this the Apoſtle gives the Title of the *New Man*, and calls it by the name of *Knowledg*, but ſuch a Knowledg as carries along with it *Bowels of Mercies, Humility, Kindneſs, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering, and particularly Love* or *Charity*. And in another place he ſays, this *New Man or renewed Image of God*, ſtands in *Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*, which is the ſame with the former Account. And therefore there is no ground for piecing together what the Apoſtle ſays of this in theſe two Epiſtles, as if he had given an imperfect account of it in each of theſe places.

Gen. 1.26, 27.

Col. 3. 10, 11, 12, 13.

Eph. 4.24.

Nay, there are even Veſtiges of this to be traced in the degenerate Natures of unrenewed Sinners: For unleſs we believe Religion, and have ſome Notion of it, we can never ſufficiently underſtand for what end the very Faculties of our Souls were given us. For as we have bodily Organs and Senſes, whereby we are capable to converſe with material and ſenſible things; ſo we have reaſon * alſo, whereby we can think of things abſtracted from Senſe and

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* ——— Separat hæc nos
A Grege Mutorum, atq; ideo venerabile ſoli
Sortiti Ingenium, Divinorumq; capaces,
Senſum a Cœleſti demiſſum traximus Arce.
Juven. Sat. 5.

Matter,

Matter, which the Eye never ſaw, nor the Ear heard of. For by this we can ſoar above things below, and paſs beyond the boundaries of time and place. And let none ſay, that all this is from Education; for were there not a Faculty in us capable of diſcerning theſe things, all the teaching in the world would avail us nothing; and an Aſs or Hog might be taught this as well as we. Nay do we not experience this, that no imperfect Object can give us intire and full ſatisfaction? which ſhews us that our Souls are formed for ſomething more noble than this World. 'Tis true, we know not even finite things perfectly; yet thus much we know of them, that they are finite and unſatisfactory. And therefore our Souls muſt ever remain fleeting and diſquieted, without the Objects which Religion preſents us with.

I might here run out into many things that this Subject would lead me into. But time allows me only to hint ſome few things, and forces me to paſs by many others. It is from this Connaturalneſs of Religion to us, that we find a ſecret Pleaſure in our being conſcious to our ſelves that we act virtuouſly and well, tho we bring thereby no advantage to our ſelves as to this World; and that the Mind at other times is under uneaſy Thoughts, from a ſenſe of being guilty of ſecret Evils, when none knows of them, and when all things external go fair and ſmooth. Whence is it that good men can rejoice in Tribulations and continued Troubles in this Life? And whence is it that ill Men are ſcar'd and tormented by the review of their own Crimes, when they are in no danger to be puniſhed by Men? If Fears and Vexations did only haunt

Cottages, we might ſuppoſe theſe proceeded from the dread of temporal Puniſhments: but when they infeſt the Cloſets and Thrones of Princes, tho never ſo abſolute and above human Power, they muſt ſurely have another Cauſe. Theſe things aſſure us, that there are Rules and Laws, which have a peculiar relation to the Soul and Mind, by which it is to ſteer its courſe with reſpect both to a preſent and future Satisfaction and Happineſs; and that it has things to mind which immediately concern it ſelf, and not the Body,

Theſe hints may ſerve to ſhew what ſuitableneſs and congruity there is between Religion and the Soul. But this will appear further if we conſider what the firſt Principles and Sentiments of Religion are, which God has continued with all Men, more or leſs. And I cannot forbear to ſpeak of theſe, becauſe it is this way God chiefly takes to maintain his Government in a moral Senſe over human Race.

Whatever Diſcrepancy there is among Nations and Perſons as to their Sentiments of Religion, as well as Rites and Ceremonies; yet ſtill there are three things that Men have in a manner univerſally agreed upon in all Ages; and are ſufficient to give a tolerable Idea of Religion in general.

1. Mankind hath agreed in this, That there is a God, *i. e.* a moſt glorious and perfect Being, to whom we owe the moſt ſolemn Veneration and Adoration. Whatever abſurd Fancies ſome Nations have admitted as to the Diety, yet ſtill ſome belief and worſhip of him we find: For ſo ſtrongly is this Perſwaſion rooted in human Nature, that men will rather worſhip any

any thing, than not believe the Being of a Deity. So that the groſſeſt Idolatries and Superſtitions that ever were, are ſtill a Proof of this Truth. And it is plain that this could not come from Colluſion, mutual Intercourſe, or the Tricks of Politicians, ſince the moſt barbarous Nations, the remoteſt Iſlanders, and the lateſt diſcovered Places of the World are found to agree in this general Sentiment. 'Tis true, ſome People are talk'd of about the *Cape of Good Hope*, and in *New Holland*, who ſeem to have no ſort of Worſhip among them, and hardly any thing like Reaſon. But I am apt to think that their ferity and wildneſs occaſions this not to be obſerved in them. They are terrified at the ſight of Europeans, and therefore before them may ſhow no ſigns of this. And beſides, the Signs whereby they expreſs their belief of a Deity may be ſo odd, that they may be eaſily miſtaken for ſome other thing by thoſe who ſee and obſerve them. But if indeed they be a Race of Idiots, we cannot expect Religion where Reaſon is wanting. But ſuppoſing there were Nations ſunk ſo far below other men as to become a kind of Brutes; this militates no more againſt our Aſſertion, as to Religion, than it dos againſt Mens being reaſonable Creatures, becauſe we find in ſome places Houſes fill'd with Fools and mad Men. And the ſame conſiderations ſhews, That our Aſſertion is no way weakened by reaſon of the monſtrous Production of ſome Atheiſts in the World; if indeed there ever were any ſuch Perſons really.

2. Mankind generally agrees in this alſo, That there is a vaſt difference between Virtue and Vice. There is ſuch a comelineſs and beau-

ty in Virtue and good Actions. and ſuch a deformity and monſtroſity in Vice and Wickedneſs, that Men cannot but ſee and own the Contrariety. And therefore all ſorts of People, even the moſt barbarous, have found it neceſſary to have Laws and Rules among themſelves, for encouraging the one and ſuppreſſing the other. It is therefore a moſt unaccountable thing that there ſhould be any Pretenders to Reaſon, who ſhould tell us, that this Difference between Virtue and Vice dos not ariſe from the different and oppoſite nature of the things themſelves, but from the Laws of Men, that encourage the doing one thing, and make another thing criminal. It were an eaſy thing to ſhew the monſtrous Abſurdity of this from ſeveral Conſiderations. But I ſhall only make one Suppoſition to the Gentlemen of this Opinion, if indeed they be ſerious in making the Objection. I ſuppoſe then that they themſelves had all Power in their hands, and ſhould attempt to make good their own Aſſertion by inverting all our Laws, and give out Edicts that all Men ſhould lie, cheat, ſteal, raviſh and deſtroy. Would theſe Crimes immediately change both Nature and Name, and become Virtues? I ſuppoſe they would ſoon alter their opinion, and ſee that Vice was Vice ſtill, tho incouraged by Laws. All then that can be ſuppoſed to be at the bottom with theſe Men, is that they love to live lawleſs themſelves. But their love of Life and reſpect to their Eſtates, will never allow them to wiſh that every Man had power to kill or impoveriſh them; tho perhaps they wiſh to have ſuch Power over others themſelves.

3. Mankind likewiſe has generally agreed in the

the belief and expectation of a future ſtate of Happineſs as the Reward of good Men, and of Miſery as the Puniſhment of bad Men: tho the Conceptions of the Heathens were exceeding dark and confuſed in their Notions thereof. However their *Styx* and *Tartarus*, and their *Elyſian* Fields, how fabulous ſoever, had their riſe from this Notion. And theſe Accounts do confirm to us, that they had ſome Idea of a future State; as much as Idolatry dos ſuppoſe the Belief of a Diety. And how could Men avoid this, who believed that God ruled the World in a way of Juſtice, and yet ſaw how unequally Rewards were diſtributed here? To reconcile theſe ſo oppoſite and contrary things, the Reaſon of Man might eaſily be ſuppoſed to conclude, that God would at laſt clear up all things according to the Rules of exacteſt Juſtice; and ſince that was not done in this Life, it followed that there muſt be another, wherein Rewards and Puniſhments will be diſpenſed to Men impartially according to their Works. And this ſeems to have been at leaſt the principal Reaſon of their belief of this, * of which ſome

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**M. Tul. Cic. Somn. Scipionis.* Omnibus, qui patriam conſervarint, adjuverint, auxerint, certum eſſe in Cœlo definitum locum, ubi beati ævo ſempiterno fruantur. *Ibid.* Immo verò ii vivunt, qui ex corporum vinculis, tanquam e carcere evolaverunt. *Ibid.* Juſtitiam cole & pietatem: —— ea vita via eſt in Cœlum, &c. *Manil. lib.* 1.

An fortes animæ dignataq; nomina Cœlo,
Corporibus reſoluta ſuis, terraq; remiſſa,
Huc migrant ex orbe, ſuumq; habitantia Cœlum,
Æthereus vivunt annos mundoq; fruntur.

Philoſophers and Poets too ſeem to have had no contemptible Notion.

Now ſeeing theſe things lay the foundation of a tolerable Idea of Religion in general; and ſince Men, generally ſpeaking, have in all Ages and Places believed theſe Principles; is it poſſible to conceive that they who differed in almoſt all other things, ſhould agree by mere chance in a common Miſtake and Impoſture? I grant that it is not the bare multitude of Aſſerters that can aſſure us of the truth of any thing; ſince ſometimes the generality of Men has been found to cry up that for truth, which has at laſt been found to be a miſtake: For a thing is not true becauſe voted up by the Poll, but becauſe demonſtrated by Reaſon. But then it is to be conſidered, that theſe things wherein the generality of Men have erred at any time, have either been Facts which the Teſtimony of one has made many miſtake in, or remoter Truths that depend upon ſome Subtilty of Reaſoning, and not fundamental and firſt Truths: And of ſuch things I can only be of * *Ariſtotle*'s and † *Cicero*'s mind, *that which is believed by all is true.* But in my reaſoning on this Head, I have not barely made this an Argument for the verity of Religion, that moſt are on that ſide; but have alſo diſcovered that this is believed by Men, becauſe congruous and agreeable to the univerſal Reaſon of Mankind: And if the former ſaying of *Ariſtotle* and *Cicero* be taken in this ſenſe, I look upon it to be as certain a Maxim as any in the World, or otherwiſe we have no foundation of certainty at all.

These

* Ὁ πᾶσι δοκεῖ τοῦτο εἶναι φάναι. *Ariſt.*

† Quod omnibus videtur, eſt. *Cic.*

Theſe things being thus laid down, lead our Minds inſenſibly to ſee the Truth of the Propoſition: For whatever way God influenceth the Minds of Men to apprehend theſe, whether by Impreſſions from himſelf, or by a natural tho occult Derivation from Parents by generation, in the ſame way that the ſame Tempers and Diſpoſitions are communicated to them; or whether he doth this by giving hints of theſe things to the minds of Men by the ſecret Voice of Angelical Meſſengers, or only by traditional Conveyance and Converſe with others, and our improving our own Reaſons from thence by conſidering and laying together things repreſented to us by our Senſes: I ſay, whether God affords Men Notices and Principles by all theſe ways, or any of them; ſtill I am ſatisfied there is ſuch an univerſal Notion and Belief of Religion. And this being ſuppoſed, we muſt needs conclude, That this muſt be the great Law and Inſtrument of God's governing Men, ſince he muſt govern them according to their Natures. And it were eaſy to ſhew that it is no more the eſſential Property of Man to be a reaſonable Creature, than it is to be a religious one; and I believe it is more difficult to prove that Brutes have nothing of Reaſon, than that they have nothing like Religion.

But I cannot forbear giving my thoughts ſome further Scope on this Head, by hinting to you how theſe Principles, and the Notion and Belief Men have of Religon do exert themſelves. Some things there are which ſpring from the aforementioned Principles of Religion, which, if rightly improved, do exceedingly tend to promote Godlineſs; and which the wiſe Rector of Men

makes great uſe of in the Government of the World. But before I propoſe theſe, I muſt premiſe this one Conſideration; that the Voice and Deſire of Nature is a quite different thing from that of Vice and Luſt: For Corruption of Mind differs as much from its natural Conſtitution, as ſickneſs dos from health of Body. A Man in Sickneſs may long for things hurtful; but Nature left to it ſelf, and not ſuppreſt, has a deſire only to things innocent and good.

Now there are two ſorts of Deſires or Appetites in the Souls of Men; which I ſhall chooſe to call by the Deſignation of *Primary* and *Secondary* ones; becauſe the firſt ſort are more clearly the Product of the Remains of Religion in Mens Nature: Whereas the *ſecond* ſeem at firſt view to ariſe wholly from Corruption and vicious Habits of Mind; which yet we may trace further, even to the rational Faculties of our Souls, tho they run thro theſe as vitiated in their Acting, and ſo bear the Impreſſion of the ſame Obliquity.

The *Primary* Affections, Deſires, and Appetites, which ſpeak forth the Remain of Religion in the Soul to be their Original, and which God makes great uſe of in the Government of Men, and which likewiſe tend naturally, where they are improved, to promote Virtue and Piety, and the good of Nations: Theſe primary Deſires, I ſay, are chiefly theſe following; which I can only juſt propoſe as Hints to be dilated and ſtreteh'd out by your own Meditations. The Firſt is, The Love that naturally all Men have to what is noble, excellent, valuable and good. Wiſdom, Juſtice, Goodneſs, Love, Kindneſs and Faithfulneſs, are ſuch

ſuch raviſhing things, that wherever they are found or ſuppoſed to be, they force delight in us, and admiration and reſpect from us; eſpecially where they are found in Perfection. When therefore we have any true Idea of the divine Perfections, we are unavoidably prompted to admire, love and adore God. The Reaſon therefore that Men are not more univerſally taken with theſe things, as repreſented by Religion, is not becauſe they hate ſuch things; but becauſe they will not allow themſelves to believe that Religion is poſſeſſed of theſe good things, as being intoxicated with the love of imaginary Perfections, which run counter to theſe Realities, which Religion propoſes as the only excellent things, condemning at the ſame time thoſe fancies that ſuch Men doat upon. The *Second* is, The Propenſion and ſecret Wiſh that naturally ariſes in our Souls, That we might be ſo happy as to have a Friend that might be univerſally uſeful to us: one who could infallibly direct us in all things, who would be loving, kind, and ſympathizing, would be ſo faithful that we might intirely confide in him, who were capable to make us happy every way, and who could be ſubject to no Paſſion, Humour, or Change. No a Friend thus perfect is but another Name for God; and therefore this ſeems to be the very breathing of Nature after him pointing to God as the Needle in the Compaſs to the North Pole. And is it not madneſs then, for Atheiſts to laugh at thoſe who believe God is, at the ſame time they wiſh there were ſuch a one? I might take occaſion here to ſhew, that it is no ſmall proof that God is, to ſee that it is the univerſal Wiſh of human Nature at bottom, that ſuch a one were:

For

For this ſuppoſes ſome Conception of a God. And how is it poſſible that any finite Being ſhould forge the Idea of an infinite One, if God himſelf did not impart this as far as we are made capable to receive it? For without this, we cannot ſolve the Difficulty by a traditional Conveyance: For who gave it to that Man that imparted it to me; and who again to him? *&c.* Beſides, tho our mixed Notions may be falſe, as we may conceive a Mountain of Gold, tho it be not, by putting two very different Notions together without reaſon; yet the ſimple Notions, of which mixt ones are compoſed, muſt, I conceive, be true; or otherwiſe we could have no Conception of them: For I cannot underſtand how the Glaſs of the Mind ſhould form the Idea of ſimple Beings that are not, any more than a Mirror can receive and expreſs the Image of what is not before it. But that I may not digreſs too far, I ſhall only ſay further, that I look upon God as a neceſſary Being, and am of *Bradwardin*'s mind, who ſomewhere * proves, that it is impoſſible for God not to exiſt. The *third* Appetite and Deſire of the rational Nature is, To be immortal. Life is ſo noble a Bleſſing, that without it we can enjoy no other. And hence, even thoſe who believe not a future Life, or the Souls Immortality, do

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* O quam neceſſe eſt Deum eſſe! Qui ſi non eſſet, nihil eſſet verum, nihil eſſet falſum, nihil eſſet neceſſarium, nihil eſſet contingens, nihil eſſet poſſibile, nihil eſſet impoſſibile. O quam neceſſe eſt Deum eſſe, quem impoſſibile eſt non eſſe! *Bradwardinus de Cauſa Dei contra Pelag.*

ſtill

ſtill wiſh that this Life were perpetual. And *Felo's de ſe* prove nothing againſt this, being juſtly lookt upon by all Men to be in a fit of madneſs when they do ſo. The Action of *Cato* and ſome other brave Heathens ſay leſs againſt this: becauſe they believed a future State and the Souls Immortality, And leaſt of all can any argue againſt this from the deſires of *Paul* and other good Men to die, and of the Primitive Chriſtians Thirſt after Martyrdom: For all theſe had reſpect to a future Life and eternal Rewards; even as Chriſt himſelf *for this end endured the Croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame.* As for the poor Atheiſt, he ſtands here by himſelf alone: Whoſe miſerable Comfort is to hope doubtingly (for he can never be certain) that he ſhall ever be without ſenſe of Miſery, *i.e.* without comfort alſo. But as it is highly improbable to imagine that the moſt noble part of Man ſhould be brought into a State of non-entity, when even the Body is not ſo, tho' diſſolved; ſo I queſtion not but all unprejudic'd Thinkers will conclude that this univerſal wiſh to be immortal, renders the ſentiment of a future State highly reaſonable. A *Fourth* Appetite of the reaſonable Nature is, a deſire after Happineſs, or a Life free from Vexation and Trouble. None can poſſibly deny this who is not a ſtranger both to himſelf and others. All Men love eaſe, joy, peace and comfort: and theſe Religion not only repreſents, but makes offer of. And all Men naturally hate ſorrow, vexation, trouble and miſery: and theſe Religion offers to free us totally from hereafter, and to prevent in a great meaſure and alleviate here. It has indeed ſuch reſpect to the dignity of human nature,

ture, as well as its Intereſt, that it reſtrains us from unmanly, brutiſh and hurtful pleaſures. It does with us, as we doth with Children, whom we keep from drinking Poiſon tho pleaſant to the taſt, and from playing with Serpents, tho their skins appear fine. All the quarrel then that Men can pretend againſt Religion is, becauſe it defers our joys too long. But beſides that Religion is accompanied even here with many advantages and pleaſures; the excellency and reaſonableneſs of Religion is ſeen in this very thing: for it aſcertains us of unmixed joy as ſoon as we ſhall be ripe for it. If a Patient demand to go abroad into the fields, when he is not able to raiſe his head from the pillow without trouble: ſhall we quarrel with the Phyſician, for telling him mildly that he ſhall be allowed ſo to do, as ſoon as the rage of the Diſtemper is abated, and he in caſe to walk abroad?

Lo here a Specimen of the *primary* Deſires and Appetites of Men, which God makes uſe of as ſo many handles to turn the Acts of their mind in what Channel he pleaſeth, and thereby alſo their Lives and Converſations, Studies and Employments. But there are *others* of a worſe name and character, which perhaps are no leſs, yea often more and more immediately made uſe of in the Conduct of the World and the Government of Nations. For the wiſe Rector of Men knows how to ſubſerve himſelf by the worſt of Inſtruments, and to carry on his deſigns by the very things that we would think tend to oppoſe and fruſtrate the ſame. *He makes the wrath and* humours *of Men to praiſe him. Things that are great and mighty he brings*

Pſ. 76. 10. 1 Cor. 1. 27, 28,

down

down by things that are mean and despised; nay even *by things that are not*, but are merely Chimical and Imaginary. And such a thing is Honour, which tho' it be often but a vain Phantom, has yet been the occasion of doing the greatest things that History has to speak of. This and the other *secondary* and derivative Appetites of Men, tho' blended with Vice, so as often to deserve to come under no other *Genus*, are yet such, that a wise Man will be forc'd to trace their Original to the very rational and immortal Nature of the Soul, even tho' they appear coloured with purulent and fœtid streams from the Dunghil of Corruption, wherewith our Nature since the Fall is clog'd, and in a great measure stopt up. And since I mention'd Honour just now, let that be the *first* thing to be considered under this Head; All Men have an itch to be honoured and esteemed, from the Prince to the Peasant. There is none so mean spirited, but he has an ambition to be valued in his way. This inspires even Tradsemen and Artisans to spend so many years in learning the Grounds and Rules of their several Occupations; not only to get Bread, but to excel, if possible, in their several Stations: for who is there that is not asham'd to be accounted an *Ignoramus* in his Profession? But this is more eminently seen in Soldiers, who leave their Friends and Countrey, endure Fatigues, rush into seen dangers, bear up under hardships, and run the risk of their Life almost continually; and all this in hopes to get Honour, and to be raised to some Post where they may be more taken notice of, and live in more esteem: in the mean time comforting themselves that if they die, it is in the Field of Glory and

Bed

bed of Honor. Such a Thirſt after Honor in *Nebuchadnezzer*, *Cyrus*, *Alexander* and *Cæſar*, God made uſe of to new-model the World four ſeveral times. And in ſhort, all the great Actions of the fam'd Hero's of the World, have mov'd very much on this Hinge. See then how eaſily God can govern the World by this one thing. An Ambition and Thirſt after the Honor to be great, has inſpir'd a mighty Prince to deſtroy his Neighbours and oppreſs his Subjects. And a laudable and noble Ambition to be great in Goodneſs, has inſpir'd a greater Soul'd Monarch to ſtop him in his career, and to unplume him of his airy feather, to the ſecurity and peace of many Nations, as well as his own real Glory. Now whence does this deſire of Honor ſpring up in the Souls of Men? ſurely from one of the firſt Principles of Religion, *viz.* a juſt height of Spirit, to act agreeably to our nature, not to ſtoop to unmanly things, and what are beneath us, but to aſpire to the Eſteem and Approbation of God, to ſeek his Honor, and that which thoſe that honour him may expect from his Goodneſs upon ſo doing. This we may trace even in the moſt crooked and ſiniſter courſes that ſome Men take. But we may find it illuſtriouſly diſplay'd in the gallant and truly noble performances of the Servants of God; *Who thro faith ſubdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteouſneſs, obtained Promiſes, ſtopt the mouths of Lyons, quench'd the violence of the fire, eſcap'd the edg of the ſword, out of weakneſs were made ſtrong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight Armies of Aliens.* The *ſecond* thing of this ſort, which I would mention, is akin to the former; and it is Deſire of Fame. How

Heb. 11. 33, 34.

great

great things has this alſo inſpired men to do? To this it is owing, that we have ſo many of the Writings of learned Men. To this we are oblig'd for the Account we have of the Inventors of Arts, as well as for the Invention of them; for the Account Hiſtories have preſerved to us of the great Men of Antiquity, as well as their great Actions; and for the Structures and famous Monuments, that continue to be the wonder ſtill of theſe laſt Ages. The Pyramids of *Egypt* and the reſt of the wonders of the World, and the Monuments of old *Greece* and *Rome*, as well as the late Archievments in Architecture, Sculpture, Limning, Ingraving and Statuary, do owe their ſeveral Productions to this thing we call Fame, And whence does this proceed but from the immortal Nature of the Soul, or from an immortal deſire to be known to future Ages? If ſome have deſtroyed Temples, and laid waſte Countrys from hence: yet ſtill we may trace the Principle thro the irregularity of the means Men have made uſe of to reach this end. A *third* thing that I would conſider is Covetouſneſs, and an unſatiable Deſire of acquiring Riches. This likewiſe has a mighty influence in the Government of the World: ſince from hence the Strength and Security of Nations in Peace, and their Sinews and Atchievments in War do very much proceed. I know there is nothing more contrary to the ſpirit of Religion than this, as Religion is truly diſplayed in Scripture, eſpecially the New Teſtament, where *Covetouſneſs is called* Idolatry. But this does not hinder the wiſe God from making uſe of this unruly Paſſion for wiſe ends, as Experience convinceth us he doth. Col. 3. 5.

There

Therefore if we allow our ſelves to conſider the Orignal of this, we ſhall find, that however depraved a Principle it be now, yet its firſt Original is the moſt noble that can be. For it proceeds from no leſs a Principle than that of Self-preſervation; whereby we are obliged to ſeek after all thoſe things that tend to our Good and real Advantage. Only Men, by reaſon of Sin, miſtaking the things wherein their real Good doth ſtand, have ſottiſhly fallen into a groſs Notion of placing it in things tranſitory and vain, inſtead of truly valuable and permanent enjoyments. The *fourth* and laſt thing I ſhall mention under this Head, is the irregular deſire of Knowledg we call Curioſity. By this all Arts and Sciences have been cultivatied and arrived to that degree of Perfection they are at this day come to. Now, tho this may run to an exceſs, yet it is eaſie to trace its Original. For the improvement and cultivation of our Underſtandings is certainly one of the principal Duties of Reaſonable Creatures. but this is our weakneſs, that ſince the Fall, inſtead of minding the grand Concerns of our Souls, and what tends to make us Wiſer and better Men, we are apt to miſpend our time and exhauſt our Spirits in ſtudying things of little or no uſe. Yet this miſtaken Improvement of Reaſon, the wiſe God makes uſe of for moſt noble ends? ſo as to make great and excellent Diſcoveries ariſe from theſe Studies, otherwiſe barren and uſeleſs: as appears plainly from the advantages that Divinity it ſelf has received from the Critical, Chronological ahd Topographical Diſcoveries of curious Men, as well as from the Improvements that Mechanical Imployments have had

had of late from the Cultivation of the Mathematicks.

What I have ſaid in all this, lets us ſee that Religion is not only the Fundamental Law and Inſtrument whereby God governs Men apart, but as they join together and make up Societies and Nations: For if Religion be ſo interwoven with our Natures, that the main Principles of it are univerſally owned and believ'd; and if the Appetites and Deſires of the Soul run in this Channel, even when Men think little of this matter; then certainly we muſt conclude, that the thing which is ſo natural to all the Individuals which compoſe Societies, muſt be neceſſary to them alſo as united in Society. But leſt ſome may not be able to ſee the full force of this Reaſoning I ſhall propoſe ſome Conſiderations, which will prove this directly and immediately.

And, *1ſt.* Religion muſt be neceſſary to the well-being of Nations, becauſe it makes Men avoid thoſe things which diſturb all human Societies; ſuch as Lying, Cheating, Slandering, Violence, Thefts, Murders, Lewdneſs, Rioting, Drunkenneſs, and Rebellions; for it is plain, that it is only from the want of Religion that Men run into theſe things; whereas when Religion gets the Aſcendant over any, they immediately abandon theſe Vices and Sins.

2dly. Religion therefore is neceſſary to the Peace and Proſperity of Societies, becauſe it is the Spring and Original of all vertuous and noble Actions, and regular living: For this makes Men ſober and harmleſs, honeſt and plain, rational and conſiderate; in ſhort, good Citizens and Country-men, becauſe good Men and Chriſtians. For how is it poſſible, that he that gives

up himſelf wholly to God and Chriſt ſincerely and truly, ſhould be as ſenſual, revengeful, ambitious, covetous, and in ſum, as Wicked as others?

3*dly*. Religion muſt be neceſſary to the good of Nations, becauſe by it the very Pillars of all rightly conſtituted Governments are ſupported. Now the Pillars of Societies on which their Happineſs and Security lean, are chiefly theſe four, *viz*. Union, Order, Juſtice, and Diligence; and certainly there is nothing tends ſo much to promote theſe as Religion. For, 1. Is not this the chief Incentive to Love and Union? tho many in this, as well as in other things, walk contrary to its Maxims: For has not
Joh.13.25. Chriſt ſaid, *by this ſhall all Men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye love one another?* And doth not the Apoſtle command, that *wherein*
Phil. 3.16. *we are agreed, we ſhould walk by the ſame Rule, and mind the ſame things, as the way to underſtand without prejudice the things wherein we differ*, and in order to be bleſt of God with further Light and Love? So that it is not the having but the wanting Religion, even in many that pretend much to it, that makes them ſo far contradict this Rule and Example, to the hazard of the Publick Peace as well as their own, ſince Nations divided into Factions are in danger of ruin. 2. Religion encourageth good Order among Men; for by it we are taught *to*
1 Cor.7.10. *abide in the Calling wherein we are* in Providence
Rom.13.7. plac'd; *to give Honour to Magiſtrates to whom*
Heb. 7.17. *it is due; to obey ſpiritual Rulers alſo*; and *to be*
& 13. 5. *content with what we have, and not to envy others.* In a Word, Relative Duties are largely inculcated thereby, in order to carry rightly to all

ſorts

ſorts of Men, as Superiors, Inferiors, or Equals, under all the Circumſtances of Relation and Obligation, and of Sex, Age and Quality. 3. And ſurely there is nothing which is more the Reſult of genuine Piety, than Juſtice and Faithfulneſs in our Stations. For he that commands *Piety, requires Juſtice and Mercy to our Neighbours* in the ſame breath. Nay, our Saviour recommends this ſo much, that not content to ſay in one place, that the *Law and the Prophets did all lean upon theſe two great Principles, to Love God, and our Neighbours as our ſelves*; he adds in another, that *all the Law and the Prophets might be comprehended in this one Rule, To do to others as we would have them do to us.* 4. And is not Religion the great Incentive and Motive to Diligence? for hereby we are taught *to learn and profeſs* * *honeſt Trades, and to provide things honeſt in the ſight of all Men, and to be diligent in our buſineſs and particular Callings, and not to be ſlothful therein*; for that *if we work not, neither ought we to eat,*

Mic. 6. 8. Mat. 22. 37, 39. Mat. 7. 12. Rom. 12. 17, & 12. 2 Theſſ. 3. 10.

4*thly*. Nay, let me add this alſo, that without this Societies cannot poſſibly ſubſiſt: For take away Religion and all the Obligations it lays us under to Love, Peace, Charity, Juſtice and Truth, and all things muſt immediately run into Confuſion and Ruin: For this would overturn all Government, Settlement and Society it ſelf, and reduce Men into *Hobbs* his State of

* Tit. 4. 14. *The ſcope of the Apoſtle in this place, as well as the words induceth me to render it as it is in the Margin of our Bibles: And I take it to be a parallel Expreſſion with* Paul's *words*, Acts 20. 34, 35.

War, where Men act as the wild Beasts of the Desert, fight and kill one another, as their greater Strength or Cunning give them opportunity. Now if Atheistical Gentlemen find this too nice and tender a Point to be intrusted with the Vulgar but chuse rather to keep it a Mystery (tho they ridicule other Mysteties;) why then do they tax Church-men and Religious Persons with Hypocrisy and cheating the common People? For, as *where there is no Law, there is no Transgression*; so there is no Hypocrisy, no Cheat, no Sin, where there is no Religion.

Rom. 4. 15.

5*thly*. The necessity of Religion in order to the well-being of the World, appears from the very Practice of those who declaim most against it, who are forced to have recourse to something else in lieu of it, that Confusion in the World may be prevented. This is plain from their owning the necessity of Order and Government; For otherwise, why do they not plead for Mens being exempted from human Laws, as well as from the Laws of Religion? For what Benefit or Liberty have Men by being taught to despise the Laws of Religion, if still they be kept in awe by the Authority of Rulers? If we must be under Restraints, why does the Atheist find fault with those of Religion? Or, if he would have us to be under no Restraints, why does he reckon human Laws necessary? especially seeing without Religion no Restraints can be binding: For it is this alone that can give Law to the Mind, and bind Men by the Obligations of their own Consciences, even the greatest, who fear not human Laws. So that to this Legislators are beholden that their Laws

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are obey'd, and even Atheiſts themſelves, that they have Security as to Life and Eſtate.

And now, I hope, by this time I have ſav'd my ſelf the trouble of giving a formal Anſwer to the uſual Objections that Atheiſts make againſt Religion.

Whereas therefore it is a common ſaying with ſuch Men, that all Religion is but Cheat and Hypocriſy, I hope I have ſaid enongh to prove the contrary. I ſhall therefore only add this further, That Hypocriſy ſuppoſeth the Verity of Religion. For can that which never was be counterfeited? Or, can there be a Hypocrite, if there never was a religious and vertuous Man? This is as impoſſible, as to talk of counterfeiting Coins and Medals, that neither are nor never were, Therefore I conclude, that were not Religion the moſt excellent thing in the World, it would never be made the moſt ſpecious pretence for Evil: under the counterfeit Stamp of the pretended Authority whereof ill Men think to perpetrate Wickedneſs the more ſecurely.

Again; Whereas ſome Men have pretended that Religion is the great cauſe of all the Confuſions and Troubles that Nations and Societies fall under: I think I have ſaid enough to ſhew the falſity of this, for they are the very Oppoſites thereof that give Birth to theſe. It is Idolatry and Superſtition, Atheiſm and Infidelity, Ambition and Covetouſneſs, Inhumanity and Malice: Theſe, I ſay, are the things that lay Cities and Countries waſte, that overturn Kingdoms and Commonwealths, and that prompt Men to ſhed innocent Blood, and butcher thoſe that differ from them. Let either Papiſts or

Proteſtants pretend what they will, if they ſhall be found to force Men into their Opinions by Fire, Sword and Dragooning, by Inquiſitions, Gallies and Maſſacres, or by Fines, Impriſonment and Baniſhment, or any other ſpecies of Perſecution: All ſober and good Men who have their Eyes in their Heads, muſt look upon them as Godleſs and Irreligous Men; who, to all their other Vices, have a monſtrous ſhare of Impudence, when they are not aſham'd to father ſuch Villanies on the meek and bleſſed Jeſus, and his excellent Inſtitution of Religion: For Chriſtianity *is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Works, without Hypocriſy, and without Partiality.* It breaths nothing but Truth and Love, Beneficence and Kindneſs, Mercy and univerſal Charity, Purity and Innocence. Can Men be ill becauſe they Love and adore Infinite Goodneſs, and ſtudy to bear its Image in being good, and doing good? Can the loving our Neighbours as our ſelves occaſion us to hate and abuſe them? Or, can they who ſtudy to render to all what is their due, Honour to whom Honour, and Obedience to whom Obedience; I ſay, can this make Men factious, rebellious and ſeditious? He that can believe theſe things, there is no Contradiction but he may ſwallow afterwards.

Jam. 3. 17. ſee v. 14, 15, 16.

And now, I ſuppoſe, I have fully proved the Propoſition I laid down. For if Religion be thus natural to Men; if the main Principles thereof be acquieſced in generally; if ſuch are the Inclinations and Deſires of Mens Souls, that they run in this Channel whether they will or not; and if this thing we call Religion be abſolutely neceſſary

neceſſary to the Peace and Welfare of Societies, I ſay, if theſe things be thus, then ſurely God, who rules all things according to the Natures and Principles he has given them, muſt be ſuppoſed to make uſe of this as the great Law and Inſtrument of his Kingdom over Men. But this Will be ſtill plainer by what we are to ſay further, as to God's dealing with Men as they improve or abuſe the Principles of Religion he gives them.

In the mean time, this Argument for the Truth of Religion reſults from what I have ſaid, the force of which, I think, no Man can put by, *viz.* That a thing which is ſo agreeable to the very nature and faculties of our Souls, which all Men agree in the general Notion and Belief of the Principles of, which the natural Deſires of the Soul tend towards, and which Societies and Mens Safety cannot ſubſiſt without: that, I ſay, a thing which in all theſe reſpects is ſo neceſſary and reaſonable, muſt be a great Reality and Truth, and muſt therefore be believed actually to be. And that this is the caſe with Religion, I think I have proved. Not that I pretend to have diſcourſed fully on this great Head, which had been impoſſible to perform in ſo ſhort a time, and improper for the occaſion: Only what * others have ſaid more largely on this Head, I have given ſuch an ac-

* *See* Grotius de Verit. Rel. Chriſt. Stillingfl. Orig. Sacr. Baxter's *Reaſons of the Chriſt. Faith.* Wilkins *of Natural Religion.* Wilſon's *Diſcourſe of Religion.* Parker *of the Law of Nature and Chriſt. Relig.* Nye's *Diſcourſe of Natural and Revealed Relig.* Gaſtrell *of Religion in general.* Jaquelot de L Exiſtence de Dieu.

count of, as may ſatisfy unprejudic'd Perſons, and give ſome diſtinct Idea of Divine Providence in the Government of Men and Nations, in order to lay a Foundation for the ſucceeding part of our Diſcourſe.

Prop. IV. *That Kingdoms and Nations, in the ordinary courſe of God's Providence, are dealt with in proportion to the Knowledg which they have of Religion, and their Practice thereof; and are therefore bleſt or curſt, raiſed or ruined, as they are vertuous or wicked, more or leſs.*

We have made ſome Inquiry into the Fundamental Law of God's Government over Men; and we are now to conſider how God doth put this in Execution. It is a vain thing to give Laws to Men if they are at liberty to break them, without fear of being called to an account. But we may be ſure, whatever neglect there may be this way in human Governments, the righteous Judg of the whole Earth will do juſtly: For this is his declared Rule and Maxim of Government; *He that honours me, ſhall be honoured by me; but he that deſpiſeth me, ſhall be lightly eſteemed.*

Jer. 18. 25.

1 Sam. 2. 30.

But I am not to conſider here the Method of Divine Providence in relation to particular Perſons, but with reſpect to Communities, or Nations. My Text runs only upon this Head, and therefore I was willing to confine my ſelf to it in the Propoſition I am now upon.

I aſſert that God deals thus with Nations in the *ordinary* courſe and tenor of his Providence, that I might cut off all Quarrels and Debates about his Power abſolutely conſidered; and becauſe I was willing to be modeſt in expreſſing

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my Thoughts of ſo nice and myſterious a Subject as this of Providence is; tho had I expreſſed my ſelf without this limitation, I had not thought I had undertaken a Subject too hard to be defended. For whatever may be ſaid with reſpect to God's Conduct of particular Perſons, in afflicting good Men, and proſpering the wicked for ſome time, of which we are certain from Experience and Matter of Fact; yet we muſt remember that the caſe of Communities is vaſtly different in this particular. For God's Procedure with reſpect to the Miſeries of good Men, and Proſperity of ill Men, may be ſalved by a reference to a future State: Whereas we muſt have a very groſs Notion of things, if we imagine that Human Societies as ſuch, have the like relation to another World.

I ſuppoſe it might juſtly be thought needleſs labour formally to prove what I have laid down in this Propoſition. For, beſides that it is the native Concluſion of what has been already ſaid, and muſt be therefore true, if the Premiſes be ſo; my Text is ſuch a Proof of it, as renders all others ſuperfluous: For from this it is plain, that *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation, and that Sin not only is its ſhame, but tends alſo to its Ruin.* Prov. 14. 34.

And there is ſuch a natural, and as it were, neceſſary Connexion between Vertue and Peace, and between Vice and Vexation, that ſhews us the Reaſonableneſs of this Suppoſition. As the prudent and wiſe Carrige of a Man tends to bring his Affairs into order, and Incogitancy and Diſſoluteneſs to run them into Confuſion, ſo a wiſe Regulation in a Nation tends to its Settlement, and the contrary Practice to its Ruin.

Ruin. When we ſee a Man give himſelf up to Intemperance, and all manner of Impiety, we conclude that both his Eſtate, Body and Mind muſt ſuffer by ſo doing. And ſurely it is as reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that Publick Corruptions and Male-adminiſtration muſt tend to the Detriment of the Nation, as to its Security and Peace.

From whence we may juſtly conclude, that as God can be ſaid in no ſenſe to be the Author of Mens Sins; ſo neither can he be ſaid, in a rigid ſenſe, to be the Cauſe of their Miſery: He is the Efficient indeed of what they ſuffer, but not the Cauſe that they do ſuffer. He is the Author of their Puniſhment, as the Judg is of the Execution of the Malefactors whom he paſſeth Sentence againſt, declaring that he finds ſuch Perſons have done that which makes them incur the Penalties of the Law. Therefore it is ſaid
Pſal. 9. 16. that *the Sinners Hands make the Snares by which*
Prov. 5. 22. *they are caught.* And God tells the Jews in the words following our Text, *That the tendency of*
Jer. 18. 15, 16. *their Sins was, to make their Land deſolate and a pepetual hiſſing.* For *if a Man will not turn to*
Pſal. 7. 12, 13, 16. *God and obey him, he prepares the Inſtruments of Death againſt him; which is only to return his Miſchief upon his own Head, and his violent dealing on his own Pate.*

I might here illuſtrate the Propoſition, from the account Hiſtory hath given us of the Puniſhment of Nations, particularly the famous Monarchies of the World. For it was the heighth of Wickedneſs that broke the Force and Power of both the Babylonian, Perſian, Grecian and Roman Empires; God made the very Luxury and Wickedneſs of thoſe puiſſant Nations their Scourge and Plague, and afterwards their Deſtruction.

ſtruction. Even * *Juvenal* in his time obſerv'd this with reſpect to *Rome*. God would not deſtroy *Pharaoh* and his People till their Wickedneſs and Obſtinacy was come to the utmoſt heighth: Nor would he cut off the *Canaanites* until *their Cup* of Wickedneſs *was full*, that Juſtice could ſtay no longer. Therefore the method that Satan has ever taken to bring Deſtruction upon a People, is to deſtroy their Morals, and render them univerſally profane and wicked; for this way he throws them out from the Divine Protection. When the Sorcerer *Balaam* could not prevail againſt *Iſrael* by his Inchantments, he fell upon this deviliſh method of corrupting and profaning them, by inticing them to Idolatry and Luſt through the means of a Medianitiſh Women. And to this purpoſe may be applied the Counſel that † *Craſus* gave to *Cyrus* in order to keep the Lydians in perpetual Subjection to him, which was, that he ſhould bring in amongſt them ſoft Arts and effeminate Cuſtoms; And therefore it was with a great deal of reaſon, that ‡ *Plato* tells us, "That "a City was not ſafe neither by its Walls, nor "Fleets; nor many Inhabitants, nor Bigneſs, "without Vertue; but that Vertue alone was a "greater Defence to it than all theſe.

Gen. 15. 16.

Numb. 25. 1, 2, & *ch.* 31. 16.

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* *Juvin. Sat.* 6.

Nunc patimur longa pacis mala: ſævior armis
Luxuria incubuit, victumq; ulciſcitur orbem.

† Herodot. Clio cap. 145. p. 64,65.

‡ Plat. Alcibiad. 1. ΣΩ. οὐκ ἄρα τείχων, οὐδὲ τριήρεων, οὐδὲ νεωρίων δεῖσθαι αἱ πόλεις, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, εἰ μέλλουσιν εὐδαιμονήσειν, οὐδὲ πλήθους οὐδὲ μεγέθους, ἄνευ ἀρετῆς, &c.

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But he that will be at the pains to conſider the ſacred Hiſtory of the holy Scriptures, will ſee the Truth of our Propoſition to be no leſs than a Demonſtration.

The Rule of Providence which our Text tells us of, was ſettled even in Paradiſe it ſelf; for it was founded upon the Relation that Man ſtood in to God as his Creator, Benefactor and
Gen. 2.16, 17. Soveraign. Therefore God aſſured *Adam*, that as he ſhould continue happy if he continued obedient; ſo if he turned Rebel againſt him, he would certainly puniſh him for ſo doing. And therefore when he baſely revolted from his God and King, tho the Threatning was not executed in its full force, through the Divine Mercy interterpoſing, yet he was puniſhed in being made mor-
Gen. 3 17, 18, 19. tal, and liable to many Miſeries, and having the very Earth curſed for his ſake.

When the Antediluvian World revolted from their Obedience to God, and his Inſtitutions,
Gen. 6. 5, 6. 7, 13. ſo that the Contagion became univerſal, God brought a Flood upon them, and ſweept them off the Earth: Yet he bare long with them, and gave them warning of his Deſign both by the
Gen. 6. 3. preaching of *Noah*, and the building of the Ark, for an hundred and twenty Years. So that he ſhewed his Mercy and Juſtice both in this Procedure, as well as in preſerving the only righteous Family, then upon Earth, that this way human Race might ſtill be continued. And in
Gen. 18, 20, 21, 30. like manner God deſtroy'd *Sodom*, and its Neighbouring Cities, after he had declared he would have ſpared them had there been but ten righteous Perſons therein. His Mercy, as
* Salvin. deGubern. Dei. lib. 1. * *Salvin* ſays, was ready to ſave the City, but the Inhabitants were not fit to be ſaved, and there-

therefore Juſtice took place in them, and Mercy in the preſervation of *Lot*.

When Idolatry and Wickedneſs began to prevail univerſally in the World after the Flood, God would not deſtroy them any more as he had done before by the Deluge, but choſe another way to reclaim them from their evil Courſes; or if that would not do, to leave them inexcuſable. Therefore he chuſes *Abraham* out of the reſt of the degenerate World, and makes of him a great Nation: And this Nation he takes to himſelf as a peculiar Incloſure, giving them Laws, preſerving and ſettling them in a conquer'd Country in the face of the whole World; ſetting them thus as a lofty Beacon upon an Hill, to keep up the Knowledg and Service of himſelf in the World: And therefore * *Philo* the Jew ſays, That *Moſes* when he gave Laws to *Iſrael* of old, did not only deſign the good of that People, but the benefit alſo of all Mankind. And *Moſes* himſelf ſays much the ſame. Deut. 4. 6. 7, 8.

I might expatiate here upon the many Bleſſings promiſed to *Iſrael*, if they ſhould continue obedient, and the many Curſes threatned againſt them if they did prove rebellious. And I might ſhew thro the whole Hiſtory of that People given us in the Old Teſtament, how exactly theſe were fulfilled: But this would ſwell this Diſ- *See* Deut. 28. *and* 2 Chron. 7. 12, &c.

* Philo Jud. Περὶ Φιλανθρωπίας. Τέτο δὲ μάλιστα βέλεται διὰ πάσης νομοθεσίας ὁ ἱερώτατος προφήτης καταστκευάζειν ὁμόνοιαν, κοινωνίαν ὁμοφροσύνην, κράτιν ἠθῶν, ἐξ ὧν, οἰκίαι καὶ πόλεις, ἔθνη τε καὶ χῶραι, καὶ τὸ σύμπαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος εἰς τὴν ἀνωτάτω προέλθοιεν εὐδαιμονίαν.

courſe

courſe into a Volume; and therefore I leave the Proſecution of this to your own thoughts. This you will find runs thro the whole Annals of that People, that when they were obedient to God, who was their King in a peculiar reſpect, God did ever proſper them; but when they rebell'd againſt him, he ever puniſhed them. Was it not their Apoſtacy and Sin, that weakened their Hands and ſtrengthned their Enemies to ſubdue and conquer them? Was it not upon this account that God is ſaid to have ſold them and given them over to the Will and Power of their Neighbours? So that ſometimes the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, ſometimes the *Philiſtines* and *Syrians*, and ſometimes the *Egyptians* and *Babylonians*, prevailed over them. I cannot forbear, upon this Occaſion, to give you the Jewiſh Paraphraſe upon the 29*th*, 30*th*, and 31*ſt* Verſes of the 32*d* Chapter of *Deuteronomy*; without debating whether their ſenſe of the 31*ſt* Verſe, or that of our Verſion, from which it differs ſo much, be the truer. *O if* Iſrael *would underſtand and ſtudy the Law, then ſhould they underſtand what would be in the end! When the Iſraelites did obſerve the Law and keep the Precepts, one of them was able to chaſe a thouſand, and two of them to put ten thouſand to flight. But becauſe they ſinned and provok'd God to anger, he gave them over into the hand of their Enemies: For the Confidence of the Gentiles is not like our Confidence: For becauſe we have ſinned and diſpleaſed God, our Enemies are become our Judges.*

Targum Hieroſol. in Loc.

But he that would carry this Point to the utmoſt, needs but conſider God's caſting off the ten Tribes, and then look forward to the Captivity of the Jews; and when he finds them returned

turned into their own Land, purſue the thred of their Hiſtory down to our Saviour's time, and from thence to the Deſtruction of their City and Temple under *Veſpaſian*, and the ſucceeding Calamities of that People, particularly in *Hadrian*'s time, and their unſucceſsful Attempt to rebuild their Temple under *Julian*, with what they have met with ſince, and are at this day; and then ſurely he will ſee this Rule of Divine Providence illuſtriouſly diſplay'd and made good in every ſtep of God's Procedure with them. I could not but take notice of what I find the opinion of the Jews, in a Book of one of their Rabbies *; where he ſays, "That Hatred to "Men did overturn their ſecond Temple, as Ido-"latry and open Profaneneſs did deſtroy the firſt. Had the Jew added, their malicious rejecting of Chriſt, and purſuing him to death, he had reach'd the truth more fully.

Were it not that this point is ſo clear and perſpicuous from all theſe things, I might bring many Inſtances of God's Procedure with other Nations, both of old and in later times, to illuſtrate this point further. The Inſtance of God's Carriage in relation to *Niniveh* doth exceedingly illuſtrate what I have been ſaying. The Threatning ſeem'd to be abſolute, and no leſs than an irreverſible Decree: *Yet forty Days and* Niniveh *ſhall be deſtroyed.* Which made *Jonah* ſo peeviſh and fretful, as ſuppoſing that all Men for the future would take him for a falſe Prophet. And it is plain the Ninivites underſtood him ſo; for they go only upon a Suppo- Joh. 3. 4.

* Rabbi Abrah. Jagel Catech. Jud. Pag. 27. Edit. Lond. 1679.

ſition

ſition that perhaps God might not inflict what *Jonah* aſſured them of: *Who can tell*, ſay they, ver. 9, 10. *if God may turn and repent, that we periſh not?* But when God ſaw that they turned from their evil way, he remembred the ſettled Rule of his Providence towards Nations, mentioned in our Text, and he repented of the evil that he ſaid he would do unto them, and he did it not: For, as he tells *Jonah*, if he had pity on the Gourd, there was certainly more reaſon to pity ſo populous a City as *Niniveh* was.

Beſides, is not the Hiſtory of all, but eſpecially Chriſtian Nations, a conſtant proof and illuſtration of this Point. What overturned the famous Aſiatic Churches but Sin, as they are loudly warned and threatned in the ſecond and third Chapters of the Revelation? Was it not this that brought in the Saracens and Turks upon the Eaſtern Parts of the Roman Empire, and the Goths and Vandals upon the Weſtern Parts of it? Let any Man read * *Salvian* upon this Subject, and he

* Tranſcenderunt in Hiſpaniæ terras Populi Vandalorum: mutata quidem eſt ſors Hiſpaniæ, ſed non mutata vitioſitas.——— Circumſonabant armis muros Carraginæ Populi Barbarorum: & Eccleſia Carthaginenſis inſaniebat in Circis, luxuriabat in Theatris: alii foris jugulabantur, alii intus fornicabantur: pars plebis erat foris captiva hoſtium, pars intus captiva vitiorum. Cujus ſors pejor fuit, incertum eſt. ——— Vidi ego ipſe Treveros domi nobiles, ſicet jam ſpoliatos atq; vaſtatos minus tamen everſos rebus eſſe quam moribus. Adeo graviores in ſemet hoſtes, externis hoſtibus erant, ut licet jam a barbaris everſi eſſent, a ſe tamen magis everterentur. Sed quid plura? Incredibile eſt quod loquor: aſſiduitas illic Calamitatum, augmentum Criminum fuit. *Salvian. De Gubern. Dei, lib. 6.*

will

will ſee how juſt God was in puniſhing *France*, *Spain*, *Afric*, and other Parts of the Roman Dominion, by the Irruption and Invaſion of barbarous Nations.

I might bring this point nearer home, and ſhew you that it was Wickedneſs, and the Contempt of the Goſpel and ſerious Piety in *France*, among the Proteſtants there, that brought this laſt ſevere Perſecution upon them. And that ſome meaſure of the ſame Evils brought this Nation near the brink of Deſtruction alſo, had not God in mercy retrieved us to this time: *But unleſs we repent we muſt all likewiſe periſh.* Luke 13. 3.

But it is high time now to end this *Firſt Part* of our Text, and proceed to the *Second*. And ſince I have inſiſted ſo largely on this, I ſhall diſpatch the next with all poſſible brevity.

PART II.

The Divine Method of Providence in governing Nations applyed to the Jews, with relation to their Caſe and Circumſtances.

We have taken a view of God's declared Rule and Method in governing Nations in general, and we are now to conſider the Application that he makes thereof to the Kingdom of the Jews, in the laſt of the Verſes which make up our Text. The Scope of which I have given before, and therefore ſhall not trouble you with it again; but ſhall immediately proceed to ſet before you the principal Truths therein contained, in ſome plain Propoſitions; which therefore will require little proof or illuſtration.

Prop. I. *The greateſt Privileges that God beſtows either upon a Nation or Church, will not be enough to ſave or ſecure them, if they apoſtatize and degenerate.*

This ſhines ſo bright, and is ſo plain from Scripture and Experience, that to propoſe it is to prove it; and therefore I need only deſire, for illuſtration of this, that God's Diſpenſation to the Jewiſh Nation and Church be conſidered. I ſhall but read to you what God ſays to this People by this ſame prophet: *Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, the God of* Iſrael, *Amend your wayes and your doings, and I will cauſe you to dwell in this place. Truſt ye not in lying words, ſaying, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are theſe: For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings;* ——*then will I cauſe you to dwell in this place, &c. Behold ye truſt in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye ſteal, murder, and commit Adultery, and ſwear falſly, and come and ſtand before me in this Houſe, which is called by my name, and ſay We are delivered to do all theſe Abominations? &c. But go ye now unto my place which was in* Shiloh, *where I ſet my name at the firſt, and ſee what I did to it, for the Wickedneſs of my People* Iſrael. *And now becauſe ye have done all theſe Works, ſaith the Lord, and I ſpake unto you, riſing up early and ſpeaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye anſwered not; therefore will I do to this Houſe which is called by name, wherein ye truſt, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your Fathers, as I have done to* Shiloh. *And I will caſt you out of my ſight, as I have caſt out all your Brethren, even the whole Seed of* Ephraim

Jer. 7. 3, 4, 5, &c.

in ——— *For I ſpake not unto your Fathers, nor commanded them in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices. But this thing commanded I them, ſaying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye ſhall be my People, and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.* ——— *I will cauſe to ceaſe from the Cities of* Judah, *and from the Streets of* Jeruſalem, *the Voice of Mirth, and the Voice of Gladneſs.* ——— *For the Land ſhall be deſolate.* Behold in this Mirror, how little God values Orthodoxy, Profeſſion, yea and Devotion it ſelf, as to the external Part, where Mens Morals are corrupted: and how little all theſe will avail to the ſecurity of a People, who are leud, wicked and prophane. Therefore it is an undeniable Maxim with me, *That there are no Opinions and Principles ſo hateful to God and pernicious to Men, as thoſe which tend to encourage Licentiouſneſs and Immorality.*

Prop. II, *Tho no Privileges can ſecure an Apoſtate Nation and Church from Miſery, yet God doth ſufficiently declare that he is not willing to give up with thoſe, whom he has once owned as his own People.*

The whole tenor and frame of God's Diſpenſations towards his People ſhews this, That he loves not to put them away, or to give his Church a Bill of Divorce. His Procedure ſpeaks to his People, what of old he ſaid to *Iſrael: How ſhall I give thee up O* Ephraim? *How ſhall I deliver thee over to deſtruction O my Church? How ſhall I make thee as* Adma, *and ſet thee as* Zeboim? *My Heart is turned, my Bowels* Hoſ. 11. 8.

are kindled together, &c. And upon this score, our Saviour wept over *Jeruſalem* this ſad Lamentation: *O Jeruſalem, who killeſt the Prophets and thoſe that are ſent unto thee; How often would I have gathered thy Children, even as a Hen doth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not? Therefore is your Houſe left unto you deſolate. O! therefore if thou hadſt known even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but alas! I find they are hid from thine eyes.*

Matth. 23.37,38.

Luk. 19. 41, 42.

It is from this divine mercy, that God gives Men ſo many warnings and indications of his diſpleaſure becauſe of their ſins, and of their danger upon that account. The deſign of which is to induce them to repent and reform, that no evil may befal them. His Threatnings therefore are no leſs the product of his Mercy than his Promiſes are. For they ſpeak forth his Compaſſions, that he *loves not to afflict nor grieve the Children of Men*: and that when he does this, it is becauſe he is as it were forced to do ſo, that the Authrity of his Law may not ſuffer, nor he be reckoned a careleſs Spectator of human Affairs, or a Conniver at ſin.

Lam. 3.33.

Prop. III. *If neither Mercies nor Threatnings will work upon a People, whom God hath ſo ſingularly privileged; it may juſtly be expected that God will puniſh them with ſeverer ſtroaks than other Nations.*

God may bear long with a profeſſing People, but he will not bear always. His patience is great, but he will puniſh at laſt, when Men do abſolutely refuſe his Mercy. And Juſtice and Equity requires, that Mens accounts ſhould bear pro-

proportion to their receipts, and their puniſhments to both theſe: *For to whom much is given, of them much will be required; and they that know their Maſter's will, and do it not, muſt expect to be ſmitten with more ſtripes than they that are ignorant thereof.* God deals with Nations, in the courſe of his Providence, in proportion to the light that he affords them. Heathens, Mahometans and Jews will not therefore fall under ſuch ſeverity as wicked Chriſtians: nor can we ſuppoſe that blinded Papiſts will meet with the ſame degree of Puniſhment with enlightned Proteſtants. *You only*, ſays God to the Jews, *have I known of all the Nations of the World, therefore you will I puniſh above all others for all your iniquities.* Whereby we are led to ſee the proportion of mercies, ſins and puniſhments; *viz.* that no privileges are ſo great as thoſe of God's Church, and conſequently that no ſins are ſo highly aggravated as theirs, and that therefore none can juſtly expect to be puniſhed ſo ſeverely as they. Therefore our Saviour tells us that *it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sydon, yea for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment, than for Chorazin, Bethſaida, Capernaum, and other places where he had converſed and preached ſo much, and wrought ſo many miracles.*

Luke 12. 47, 48.

Am. 3. 2.

Luke 10. 12, 13, 14.

Prop. IV. *Since particular perſons are involved in the Fate of Nations, every one is to do his beſt, in his ſtation and capacity, for the publick Peace and Safety.*

It was God's command to the Jews of old, *that they ſhould pray for the Peace even of the Cities of their Enemies, where they were to remain Captives, becauſe in the Peace of ſuch Cities their*

Jer. 29. 7.

own was involved. Surely then there is more reaſon we ſhould pray for the Peace of the City and Country to which we belong, not as Priſoners but Citizens, who have both our civil and ſacred Privileges and Liberties involved with thoſe of the Publick.

It is not my buſineſs here to ſpeak of the Duties of Rulers and Magiſtrates. The Scripture gives the Character of the Perſons, as to their Qualifications, when it tells us; *That he that*
2 Sam. 23. 3, 4. *ruleth over Men ſhould be juſt, ruling in the fear of the Lord*; and that ſuch Perſons *ſhould be*
Ex. 18. 21. *Men fearing God and hating Covetouſneſs*; that ſo they may neither be frighted nor bribed from their Duty. And the Word of God doth no leſs plainly deſcribe their Office and Work, *viz.* that they ought to be *Encouragers of, and a Security unto good and vertuous Men, and the*
Rom. 13. 3, 4. *Diſcouragers of wickedneſs, and the terror of evil doers; as being the Miniſters of God to Men for their good.*

But that which I am to conſider here, is, how private Men, who wiſh well to the publick Good, may promote this, without exceeding their Sphere, or invading the Magiſtrates Authority and Office. And in order to ſpeak to this, I find I am as it were inſenſibly led to an Improvement of the Doctrine of Providence, we have been ſo long upon.

IMPROVEMENT.

In all publick Calamities or hazard of them, every good Citizen and Country-man is oblig'd to be aſſiſting as far as he can to the extricating himſelf and others from impending miſery: for

for the Principles both of ſelf-preſervation and publick ſpiritedneſs require this of him. When a Ship is in hazard of ſinking at Sea, all hands are at work, to ſave themſelves from the common calamity. And ſurely then when a Nation is in hazard of Ruine, either from Enemies at home or abroad or both, it is the Duty and Intereſt of all Men to do their beſt to ſecure their Country; eſpecially of thoſe who are, by reaſon of Place, Intereſt, Wiſdom or Authority, moſt capable to aſſiſt. For what more Noble Title can any Man bear than to be, in the beſt ſenſe, a true and ſtanch Patriot of his Country, and to have no Intereſt divided from it? which makes up a great part of the noble Character * *Lucan* gives of the famous *Cato Uticenſis.*

It hath pleaſed the great Senate of this Nation, upon ſuppoſition that wicked Aſſaſſinates ſhould find means to cut off his preſent Majeſty, and thereby ſhake not only the Government but Settlement of the Kingdom, to allow and encourage the riſing up of all good Subjects to revenge ſo horrid a Fact, and to aſſiſt towards the future Settlement and Security of our Government and Law. And ſurely we muſt be ſuppoſed to be equally authoriſed by the Law to do

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* *Lucani* Pharſal. Lib. 2.

— Hi mores, hæc duri immota Catonis
Secta fuit, ſervare modum, finemq; tenere,
Naturamq; ſequi, Patriaq; impendere vitam;
Nec ſibi, ſed toti genitum ſe credere mundo.
Urbi Pater eſt, Urbiq; Maritus:
Juſtitiæ cultor, Rigidi ſervator Honeſti:
In commune Bonus. Nulloſq; Catonis in actus
Irrepſit partemq; tulit ſibi nata voluptas.

our beſt to ſecure the Nation from an inundation of Profaneneſs and Wickedneſs, whereby we are in hazard to provoke God to become our Enemy, and to bring that and the like ruining Calamities upon us, even to the making our Land deſolate, and our People an hiſſing.

If then any ask me what private Perſons ought to do, and are capable of doing as Men and Chriſtians, with reſpect to a National Security: I ſhall give my Anſwer in three words; they muſt *Intercede*, *Unite*, and *Reform*.

1. In order therefore to the continuance and increaſe of the Nations Security, Peace and Proſperity, I pray you to intercede with God, that he may continue to be gracious to us, and avert from us the ſigns of his Diſpleaſure. Pray for all Things, wherein the Proſperity and Eſtabliſhment of the Nation and Church doth ſtand. Pray for incorruptedneſs in Doctrine, eſpecially the fundamental Truths of our holy Religion; for Purity in Goſpel-Worſhip; for Charity and Moderation towards them who differ from us; for Zeal for the honour of God, managed with Wiſdom and Prudence; for a faithful, juſt and impartial Magiſtracy; for a learned, pious and laborious Miniſtry; for Unanimity in publick Counſels; and for the reviving of the power of Godlineſs and practice of Religion among Perſons of all Ranks and Sorts.

Iſ. 62. 6, 7. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not ſilence in theſe things; and give God no reſt till he eſtabliſh and make our Jeruſalem a praiſe in the earth.*

2. If we would do our beſt to ſecure the Nations Intereſt, let us unite and be at peace among our Selves. *Let us follow peace with all men.*

Heb. 12. 14.

men, and holineſs without which we ſhall never ſee the Lord. We are *to make known our moderation to all men,* becauſe *to judge is God's work, not ours. In as far as we have attained, we are commanded* by the Apoſtle *to walk by the ſame Rule, and to mind the ſame things; as the beſt way to come to know the things wherein we differ.* Our Saviour required this ſhort *Creed* from the Jews, *that as they believed in God, they ſhould believe in him alſo;* aſſuring us that *this was life eternal, to know God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he had ſent.* And when he roſe from the dead, he commanded his Apoſtles to *diſciple Men, by baptizing them* † *into the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt.* And accordingly this Belief made up the ſummary of Faith which was known and owned by Chriſtians for two hunded Years after Chriſt, as we learn from *Irenæus* and *Tertuliian* ‡, both whoſe Creeds are much

Phil. 4. 5. 1 Cor. 4. 5. Phil. 3. 16. Joh. 14. 1. 17. 3. Mat. 28. 19.

† *It is not ſaid in* Mat. 28. 19. Εν τῷ ὀνόματι, *but* εἰς τὸ ὄνομα: *and therefore it does not ſpeak forth the Authority by which the Apoſtles acted in diſpenſing this Ordinance,* (*for that is expreſſed in the words precedimg,* Go ye and teach and baptize:) *But it denotes the nature and deſign of Baptiſm, which is to initiate and enter us into the Belief of and Obedience unto Father, Son and Spirit; the Trinity being the Foundation of Chriſtianity, as ſuch; as the Belief of one God is the Foundation of all Religion. See the ſame import of the word, in the buſineſs of Baptiſm,* Acts 19. 3, 5. *Whereas when the Apoſtles Actions are ſpoken of in relation to the Authority they act by, it is ever ſaid* ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι, *as in* Acts 3. 6.

‡ *It were too long to write out both theſe Creeds; I ſhall therefore refer the Reader, for that of* Irenæus, *to his*

much the ſame, and out of which probably, with ſome alteration, that which is called the Apoſtles Creed was afterwards formed. They that believed theſe things then were owned to be true Chriſtians, if they did live accordingly: and I know not why they ſhould not now. As for other things, and the modes of thinking, methodizing and expreſſing them, Men muſt act the beſt they can, and uſe the beſt helps, in an humble fear of miſtaking, and truſt on God for light. And I know not why I ſhould quarrel with another becauſe he thinks not or ſpeaks not exactly as I do, no more than I quarrel with my ſelf for not having ſuch a clear Preception of things at ten years of age, as I ſince have reacht: which yet I do as little ſet up now to

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his Book Adv. Hæreſes, Lib. 1. Cap. 2. & 3. *That of* Tertullian *in his Book*, De Virgin. Veland. Cap. 1. *is in theſe words.* Regula Fidei una omnino eſt ſola immobilis & irreformabilis; Credendi ſcilicet in unicum Deum Omnipotentem, Mundi Conditorem, & Filium ejus Jeſum Chriſtum, natum ex Virgine Maria, crucifixum ſub Pontio Pilato, tertia die reſuſcitatum a mortuis, receptum in Cœlis, ſedentem nunc ad dextram Patris, venturum judicare vivos & mortuos, per carnis Reſurrectionem. Hac lege fidei manente, cætera jam diſciplinæ, & converſationis admittunt novitatem correctionis, operante ſcilicet & proficiente uſq; in finem gratiâ Dei. *The Creed of* Irenæus *mentions alſo expreſly, that the Church did believe* In ſpiritum ſanctum, qui per Prophetas Dei Diſpenſationes & Adventus prædicavit, *&c. Which this of* Tertullian *doth only ſuppoſe: For when it is ſaid,* Natus eſt Chriſtus ex Virgine Maria, *it was underſtood always,* per Spiritum ſanctum, *&c.*

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my ſelf as a *ne plus ultra*, as I did then the notions I had got, For it were an intolerable pride, to think I know more than all other Men; and far more to think I knew all things perfectly, Men will differ in ſome things, as long as the World ſtands. And it is reaſonable to expect they ſhould, conſidering the vaſt difference of Complexions, Studies, Capacities, Education, and other Circumſtances. And were it not ſo, we ſhould want one noble occaſion for the exerciſe of Charity, Moderation and Forbearance. I therefore lay it down as a Maxim, *That thoſe paſſionate Men who have no Charity for any but thoſe who juſt think and ſay as they do in every punctilio, are either very ignorant or very ill deſigning Men:* And I wiſh both theſe Qualities do not meet in too many. But ſurely all wiſe and ſober Men will ſee, that we ought to contend for ſome other things than Ceremonies and Modes of ſpeaking. When Infidelity and Profaneneſs undermine us, and when we have both inteſtine and foreign Enemies who are ready, if they had opportunity, to ſell us to *France* and *Rome*; it is certainly time for us to be at peace among our ſelves.

3. If ye would know further what ye are to do for the Security of this Nation, and the Church of God therein; let me tell you, that ye muſt not only Intercede and Unite, but ye muſt alſo Reform. And ſeeing Reformation relates both to our ſelves and others, I conſider it accordingly in both reſpects.

1*ſt*. Reform your ſelves, if ye would be uſeful to others: for it is a great truth that * *Plato* takes notice of, that they that would make others virtuous muſt be vertuous themſelves. And there-

* Alcibiad. 1.

therefore not only are we obliged to mind this great Work, in order to our own Peace and Happineſs, but alſo in order to be ſerviceable to the Publick. But it is not my buſineſs to inſiſt upon this Head, and therefore I ſhall ſpeak no more unto it. However, the neceſſary Connexion this hath with what comes next to be conſidered, obliged me to put you in mind of it.

2*ly*. Study not only perſonal Reformation but publick Reformation alſo, according to your ſtations, opportunities and abilities. We are not born only for our ſelves, but are obliged to be ſerviceable in the World, as much as we can.

And here bear with me, I pray you, in allowing my ſelf ſome compaſs of thought: which I hope I ſhall bring home appoſitely enough to the deſign of this exerciſe.

When a ſerious and ſober Man forms to himſelf a genuine and abſtracted Idea of the Doctrine according to Godlineſs, which we call Religion, from Reaſon and Revelation, it is impoſſible to avoid coming under ſome lively impreſſions of its Excellency, Amiableneſs and Uſefulneſs. The Reaſonableneſs and Certainty of its Principles oblige him to believe its verity. The admirable and noble Truths it diſcovereth, and lets in the mind to the contemplation of, muſt needs raviſh his Soul, and fill it with wonder. The Privileges and Bleſſings it propoſeth, as attainable, muſt be ſuppoſed to excite his deſire and hope, and make him fall in with its Scope and Deſign. The Rules it preſcribeth are ſo reaſonable, plain and pleaſant, that they are capable both to ſatisfie his mind, and encourage him to a ready compliance with them. And the

the belief of the Promiſes and Threatnings, which are added as the Sanction of the Divine Laws, muſt of neceſſity render his Study and Practice of Religion proportionably ſerious and uniform. Upon theſe and the like Conſiderations, a good Man can hardly forbear to cry out with an * Antient Chriſtian Writer: O, Religion more Regal than all Kings! for what Kings attained by force of Arms, this hath overturned without Arms: They purſued it with Perſecutions and Maſſacres: This chearfully underwent theſe, and by the ſame erected its Trophies over the Conquerors. The Branches of the Church being cut off, the Fruit of Faith did grow the more, &c.

But when ſuch a Perſon awakes out of his Meditations on this Head, and conſiders what Entertainment Religion finds amongſt his fellow-Creatures, for whoſe advantage it is calculated, he cannot but look upon moſt Men with Pity and Concern. He cannot avoid being thus affected, when he ſees ſome Men diſputing themſelves out of the belief of the moſt reaſonable and plain Principles of both Natural and Rervealed Religion; others ſcoffing at the moſt ſerious and ſacred Truths thereof, particularly the Divinity of our Bleſſed Saviour, *who is the Image* Col. 1.15. *of the inviſible God, and the* † *Firſt-producer, or Bringer-forth of every Creature*; and moſt Men living and acting as if it were their chief Study to diſgrace their own Profeſſion. I ſay, ſuch a Man

* Nilus apud Photium in Bibl. Cod. 276.

† *So I take Liberty to render the Original Word, for which I am oblig'd to ſatisfy the World. It is plain there is*

Man cannot but find his Spirit ſtir and move within him at ſo ſad a ſight, as it was with *Paul* at *Athens*, when he ſaw the whole City given to Idolatry.

He begins therefore to conſider that he is a Citizen of the World, not made to live a Cloyſter'd Life, merely to hammer out ſome Notions to pleaſe his own Fancy, far leſs to act no other part than that of the Beaſt, to mind nothing but good Paſture and Grazing, in order to eat and drink, revel, and then die: But he conſiders his Relation to others as a Member of

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is a two-fold account of Chriſt in Col. 1. 15, 16. *&c. The firſt is of Chriſt, as God, or the eternal* Λόγος, *(which the Chaldee Paraphraſes ſeem to call frequently the* Shekinah *or* Memrah Jehovæ) *in the* 15th, 16th, *and* 17th *Verſes. The ſecond is of Chriſt as Mediator,* v. 18, 19 *In both theſe reſpects he is called* πρωτότοκος, *and hence ſome explain the firſt of theſe accounts by the ſecond. But this is ſuch a force on the words, that even* Le Clere *deſerts and contradicts* Grotius *and Dr.* Hammond *on this Head. And had he obſerved the true import of* πρωτότοκος, *in this place, he had further confirmed what he ſays. I ſhall not debate here what the Antiquity of the Greek Accents is; but it is ſufficiently known that our Antient Copies of the New Teſtament are without either Accents or other Points: And therefore we are left at liberty, as the ſenſe leads us, to put the Accent here either upon the firſt or laſt* Omikron. *The word* πρωτότοκος, *tho often taken in a Paſſive ſenſe, is alſo taken ſometimes in an Active one: So we muſt underſtand* Homer, Lib. 17. l. 5. Iliad. *where deſcribing the Affection of* Menelaus, *in his running to and embracing the dead Body of his Friend* Patroclus, *he compares his Behaviour in this to that of a young Cow, when ſhe ſees her Calf kill'd, never having had any before.*

Ἀμφὶ

of a Family, City, Church and Nation, and therefore finds it his Duty to be as publickly uſeful to others as he can, without being impertinently ſo.

But it is not enough for a Man to be convinced, that it is his Duty to aſſiſt towards the carrying on a Work of Reformation in the place where he lives, unleſs he know in what way and manner this is to be attempted. He muſt therefore conſider, that tho our Laws corroborate Revealed Religion, yet Chriſtianity as ſuch, and the Civil Conſtitution remain diſtinct things. Human Laws relate only to the outward Acti-

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Ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' αὐτῷ βαῖν', ὡς τὶς πρεὶ πόρταχι μήτης
Πρωτοτόκῳ, κινυρὴ, ὃ πρὶν ἐιδυῖα, τόκοιο.

And that therefore we take the word in this ſenſe here, the ſcope of the Apoſtle conſtrains us: For pray what Argument is this; Chriſt is the Firſt born of all Creatures, for he made them all? *Beſides that, to be the firſt-born of Creatures, ſeems to import no more than this, that Chriſt is a Creature, tho the firſt produced of them. But this is ſtrong ſenſe:* Chriſt is the firſt Producer, Bringer-forth, or Original of every Creature; *or he is, as it were*, the Womb and Source of all things; for by him were all things created, *&c. If* Athanaſius *and the* Nicene *Council had not underſtood the Apoſtle in this ſenſe, with what face could they have urg'd this Scripture againſt the* Arians, *as I find they did? See* Athan. Narrat. de Concilio Nicano, Tom. 1. *And if* Origen *had not alſo underſtood this word ſo, to what purpoſe had he made uſe of it to prove that Chriſt was the Beginning and Original of the World? when he ſays,* Quod eſt omnium Principium, niſi Dominus noſter Jeſus Chriſtus, πρωτοτόκῳ omnis creaturæ? Orig. Hom. 1. in Gen. *The word therefore ſhould be rendered* Primipara, *and not* Primogenitus.

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ons of Men, in order to the Good of the Community: They promiſe no Rewards to Sincerity, Piety and vertuous Thoughts and Affections; nor do they threaten Puniſhments againſt Hypocriſy, Malice, and luſtful Imaginations, Men fear no Impriſonment, Fining or Torment for ſceptical, heretical and erroneous Opinions, as ſuch, nor for malicious and revengeful Thoughts. And therefore in all ſuch things, Men muſt be left to anſwer to Him, who gives Law to the Mind, who knows the Soul and Heart, and has erected the Tribunal of Conſcience in every Man's Breaſt. For it is the moſt unaccountable thing in the World, that Mens Opinions ſhould be extorted by Inquiſitions and Torments, and they puniſhed according to a Law, under which, in that reſpect, they are not; ſince where there is no Law, there is no Tranſgreſſion. Indeed where Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed, and Penal Laws are in force againſt ſuch who revile and blaſpheme its Profeſſion and Principles, thoſe that do ſo, deſerve the moſt ſevere Treatment, who thus dare publickly to affront the Government. Beſides, ſome Opinions are ſuch a Violation of the Law of Reaſon, and lead to ſuch deſtructive Conſequents, with reſpect to Hunan Society, ſuch as avowed Atheiſm, and ſome Popiſh Tenets, that it concerns all wiſe Governments to guard againſt them. But as to different Sentiments amongſt Chriſtians in leſſer things, ſince God deals with us as Reaſonable Creatures, we are certainly to act ſo is relation to one another. Chriſtianity, as ſuch, was never commanded to be carried on by any other compulſive Arms, than thoſe of ſtrong and convincing Reaſons, and pious and pathe-

pathetick Exhortations: And yet when Christianity is incorporated with the Law, it ought to be defended and maintain'd in the same way that we defend our other Privileges and Properties. And therefore to argue from the Passive Obedience of the Primitive Christians, when the Law of the Empire was against them, and thence press us to the like Carriage, who have the Law for us, is an odd way of reasoning: for the inverting of this is that which I think to be true arguing upon this Head, *viz.* that if Christians ought not to defend their Religion by War and Arms when the Law of the Land is against them, they are, by the same reason, obliged to defend it that way when the Law is for it, in case any Invasion be made upon it. This I urge only as an Argument, as we use to say, *ad hominem:* For I would not be thought to say, that it is absolutely unlawful to defend Christianity by Arms, even where the Law is wholly against it. But to return, I say that it is not Opinions properly that a Man is to prosecute by Human Law and the Penalties thereof; but it is the Practice of Men, if not only, yet chiefly that we are to set our selves to reform, in relation to the Security of the Community, *ne quid Respublica detrimenti capiat*, that the Nation suffer not, according to the Precaution of the old Romans.

But as for bare Opinions, and how far these are to be tolerated, my Subject allows me not to speak much; and so much has been of late written on this Head, as renders further Disquisitions this way almost needless. However, I cannot but observe something remarkable in the Practice of the Jewish Church: For, not to

ſpeak of the Sects that were among them in the latter times, nor of the particular Order of the *Rechabites* of old, it deſerves our ſerious Conſideration, that notwithſtanding their ſtrictneſs as to the Moſaical Rites, yet they thought fit to diſpenſe with them in favour of thoſe who renounced Heatheniſh Idolatry, and owned the one true and living God. They allowed not only of full Converts, who came up in all things to their ſize, whom they called *the Proſelytes of the Covenant*, but of thoſe alſo that owned only the firſt Principles of Religion, which were ſuppoſed to be comprehended in the ſeven Precepts called Noachical, as being traditionally believed to have been given out by *Noah* to all his Poſterity; which ſeem to comprehend the Decalogue in ſome ſort. The Jews tell us they were theſe. 1. *Thou ſhalt not worſhip falſe Gods, nor bow down to Images.* 2. *Thou ſhalt not take the Name of God in vain, nor blaſpheme him.* 3. *Thou ſhalt not kill or murder.* 4. *Thou ſhalt not uncover thy Parents Nakedneſs, nor commit Adultery.* 5. *Thou ſhalt not ſteal, nor take any thing that belongs to another.* 6. *Superiors ſhall judg between Man and Man, and act juſtly therein.* 7. *The Member of a living Creature ſhall not be eaten whilſt the Creature is yet alive; or, the Fleſh ſhall not be eaten with the Blood while the Life is in it.* Thoſe who owned theſe things, were called *the Proſelytes of the Gate*, becauſe they were not allowed to go within the Gate to worſhip, as the other Proſelytes. But in the ſecond Temple there was a place built for them, which was called *Atrium Gentium*, the Court of the Gentiles: For they retained the Name of Gentiles, to diſtinguiſh them from the other Proſelytes,

See Jer. 35. 2, 3, &c.

lytes, who were reckoned Jews. Of the number of the Proſelytes of the Gate, was *Naaman* the *Syrian* under the Old Teſtament, and the Centurion (mentioned *Luke* 7.) and *Cornelius* under the New. That the devout *Cornelius* was one is plain, becauſe he is called a *Gentile*, and uncircumciſed (for which ſee *Acts* 10. 2, 34, 35, 45, 47. and *chap.* 11. 3, 18.) unleſs we make him an abſolute Gentile, and no Proſelyte at all. Of theſe Proſelytes, I ſuppoſe, *Luke* ſpeaks frequently in the *Acts*, as *chap.* 13. 43. and 16. 14. and 17. 4, 17. and 18. 4. when he makes mention of σεβόμενοι, Worſhippers, or devout Perſons, who frequented the Synagogues, and yet are diſtinguiſhed from the Jews, and are ſometimes called Greeks or Gentiles. And it ſeems to have been this ſort of Proſelytes chiefly that imbraced the Goſpel at firſt. This Moderation and Toleration of the Jewiſh Church deſerves to be minded more than it uſually is. And our Reformers certainly acted from this generous Principle, when they made Liberty of Conſcience, and Thought in diſputable Matters, relating to the things of Revelation, the Foundation of ſeparating from Popery, declaring for a Judgment of Diſcretion, as the Privilege of every Man, in ſearching the Scriptures for himſelf, as the *Bereans* did, againſt a pretended Human Infallibility. And ſo *Paul* had long ago determined, when he commands us to *try all things, and to embrace or retain that which is good.* Nay, it is the Precept of our great Maſter Jeſus Chriſt to do ſo: For he expreſly enjoins his Followers, *That they ſhould call no Man the Father of their Faith and Religion, but God only, and that they*

Act. 17. 11.

1 Theſſ. 5. 21.

Mat. 23. 9, 10.

ſhould own none as the Great Doctor and Teacher of the Chriſtian Creed but himſelf; that ſo Mens Faith might be founded upon a Divine Baſis and Foundation, and not upon an human one.

And it deſerves certainly our Conſideration, that the Providence of God ſo ordered it, that the firſt * Edict that was ever made in favour of Chriſtianity, was properly an Edict for Liberty of Conſcience.

A wiſe Man therefore conſidering theſe things, finds that he is to act in a quite different way in attempting the reforming Men as to bad Principles, from what he is to take in relation to Immorality. In reference to the firſt, it is not ſeverity, or even hard words, that he is to fight againſt them with, for theſe ways can never convince the mind of any Man; but he is to attack them by ſtrong and convincing Arguments. But Immorality and wicked Actions, being againſt both Natural and Revealed Religion, and tending not only to Mens own hurt, but the diſturbance of Societies and Communi-

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* Lactantius de Mort. Perſec. Cap. 42. *hath preſerved to us this Edict of* Conſtantine *and* Licinus, *wherein are theſe words*; ——Ut daremus & Chriſtianis & Omnibus Liberam Poteſtatem ſequendi Religionem quam quiſq; voluiſſet, &c. Itaq; hoc conſilio ſalubri ac rectiſſima ratione ineundum eſſe credidimus, ut nulli omnino facultatem abnegandum putaremus, qui vel obſervationi Chriſtianorum, vel ei religioni mentem ſuam dederet quam ipſe ſibi aptiſſimam eſſe ſentiret, ut poſſit nobis ſumma Divinitas, cujus Religioni liberis mentibus obſequimur, in omnibus ſolitum favorem ſuum benevolentiamq; præſtare.

ties;

ties; it is therefore unqueſtionably the Duty of every honeſt Man to do what he can to check and put a ſtop to the Sins and Vices of the place he lives in, as his Authority, Ability, Opportunity or Station in the World give him leave: For it has by all Men in all Ages been agreed upon, that *Salus Populi ſuprema Lex eſt*, the ſafety of the Nation is the fundamental Law thereof. A ſaying which is as true in a religious as in a civil Senſe. And where a Nation is ſo happy, as not only to found its Laws upon the Principles of Nature and Reaſon, but to incorporate therewith the ſuperadded Principles of Revelation, ſo as to confirm and corroborate the Laws of God by a Civil Sanction; there a good and publick-ſpirited Perſon may act for the honour of God, and good of Mankind at the ſame time, not only with freedom but Authority; tho no private Man ought to uſurp the Power and Authority of the Publick Magiſtrate.

Now there are three things that all of us ought to make conſcience of, in order to promote this great and noble Deſign of Reformation of Life and Manners.

1. We ought to recommend Religion and Holineſs to others by our own Lives and Converſations. In vain ſhall we attempt to reform thoſe Vices in our Neighbour which we practiſe our ſelves. There is nothing more influential than good or bad Example. How many Parents ruin their Children, and Maſters of Families their Servants, by their wicked Lives. Nay the Sins of Rulers often infect the People ſo, that the worſt of Sins have become modiſh and faſhionable upon that very reaſon, that great men did

ſo.

ſo. He that conſiders how a good or bad King of old did, as it were, alter the very genius of the Jewiſh Nation, will ſufficiently ſee the force of Example. But ſuch is the degeneracy of our Nature, that we are ſooner hurt by bad than bettered by good Example; for as *Seneca* ſays truly, *Vitia diſcuntur ſine Magiſtro*, Vices are learn'd without a Teacher. Therefore we are to abſtain from all evil our ſelves, and as much as we can from *the very appearance of evil.* Let us therefore, as our Saviour adviſeth, ſtudy to live ſo, that our *Good Works may ſhine ſo before Men, that they may believe Religion is indeed a verity, and may come themſelves alſo to glorify our Father in Heaven, by a holy Life and Converſation.*

1 Theſſ. 5. 22.

Mat. 5. 16.

2. In order to promote Reformation, let us faithfully reprove thoſe that we ſee doing amiſs: for we are commanded, *not to ſuffer ſin upon them, nor be our ſelves Partakers of their Sins*, by conniving at them. But this is a tender Point, and ought therefore to be prudently managed, in relation to the Circumſtances of the Perſon, Time and Place: for otherwiſe Reproof will be taken for humour, and fall ſhort of reaching the end.

Lev. 19. 17

1 Tim. 5. 22.

3. If we would know further what we are capable to do in order to reform the Manners of Men in the places where we live; let us remember, that it is the Duty of every good Citizen and Country-man to aid and aſſiſt the Magiſtrates and Government, in puniſhing Vice and Wickedneſs. To inform them of notorious Criminals, and to facilitate the ſeizing and arraigning them for Lewdneſs, Blaſphemy, Thefts and Murders, is as Honourable as it is Neceſſary,

ſary, and is the very *Reverſe* of Informing againſt pious and good Men in a time of Perſecution. And ſurely as this is the Duty of every one in particular, ſo it is the part of wiſe and good Men, to be mutually aſſiſting to one another, in a time of general Degeneracy and Corruption; and for this end to aſſociate together in Aſſemblies and Societies, for the more regular and better carrying on of ſo great a Work. When *Iſrael* rebell'd againſt God, in worſhipping the *Egyptian* *Idol ſacred to *Oſiris*, which was the figure of a Bullock or Calf; *Moſes* deſired that all that were on God's ſide, againſt that Idolatry, might go forth armed, and kill the Ringleaders of the Rebellion, in order to appeaſe God's Anger: which had the deſired Effect. In like manner when God had ſent a Plague upon that People for their Idolatry and Whoredoms with the *Midianitiſh* Women; *Phineas* his zeal, in ſlaying *Zimri* and *Cozbi*, was ſo acceptable to God, that the Plague was immediately removed upon that heroical Act. I know theſe are extraordinary Examples, and not to be drawn into Imitation. Yet they do not, for all that, want their uſe, as ſhewing us how acceptable to God attempts of Reformation are. Had there been but ten righteous Men in *Sodom*, it had not been deſtroyed. Or had there been any Society in *Iſrael*, like theſe that are now erected amongſt us, it might have done much to have averted the *Babylonians* and *Chaldeans* from being ſent

Numb. 25.

Gen. 18. 32.

* Herod. Lib. 2. C. 42. Diod. Lib. 1. Plut. pag. 362, 364.

to

to their Deſtruction: as we have reaſon to believe, from the very words of our Text, and what follows it. For *God's hand was not ſhortned that it could not ſave, nor his Ear heavy that he could not hear: but the Iniquities of that obſtinate People did ſeparate between God and them. Their hands were defiled with Blood, and their Lips with Lies. They truſted to Vanity, and none called for Juſtice. Nay Judgment was turned away backward, and Juſtice made to ſtand afar off: ſo that Truth fell in the Street, and Equity could not enter. And all this while God waited to ſee what they would do, and wondred that there was no Man to appear for Righteouſneſs, neither any Interceſſor for a ſinful People. No wonder then, if at laſt he dealt with them according to their Deeds, repaying Fury to his Adverſaries, and recompenſe to his Enemies.* Bleſſed be God therefore, that he hath inſpired ſo many worthy Perſons at this time and place, with ſuch a generous and good Deſign, as the Reforming the Manners of Men. It is the greateſt Symptom, that I know of, that God has not yet given up with the Nation; and which I add to thoſe I once gave my Thoughts upon, in a ſmall * Eſſay on the ſtate of theſe Nations. And therefore bear with me, if I make bold to wind up this Diſcourſe, in a brief Addreſs to the worthy and honoured Promoters of this good Work.

Iſa. 59. 1, 2, 3, 4, 14, 15, 16, 18.

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* *The Rod or the Sword*, pag. 64, &c.

An

An Addreſs to the Societies for Reformation of Manners.

IT is an old and true Obſervation, *That it is a greater Victory to ſubdue ones own Spirit, than to conquer a City.* But it is certainly more heroical ſtill, when thoſe who have got the Victory over Sin in themſelves, ſubdue it in others alſo; eſpecially when the Influence becomes general, and aims at no leſs than the Reformation of Cities and Kingdoms. Such Perſons are as far above the fam'd *Alexanders* and *Ceſars*, and other Hero's of the World, as it is more noble to be Good than to be Great; to ſave than to deſtroy Men and Nations: and ſuch Men deſerve Columns, and Statues, Obelisks and Triumphal Arches, far better than thoſe, to whoſe Memory they are uſually erected. Prov. 16. 32.

I know ye are above theſe vain and empty things, as chuſing to be good rather than to make a noiſe with appearing ſo, to be publickly uſeful without affecting to be publickly known. This is indeed a Frame that ſuits well with the religious Work ye are imployed in. But as ye are concerned to promote the Honour of God and Chriſt, ſo ye may be aſſured ye ſhall not loſe your Reward. Your Names are written in the Book of God's Remembrance, and recorded in the everlaſting Regiſters of Heaven; and at the great Day ye may juſtly expect to be owned and honoured by your Lord, before God, Angels and Men.

Go on therefore in the ſtrength of the Lord, and fear no Oppoſition: Ye have both the Laws of God and Man on your ſide: all good Men are for you, and will aſſiſt you with their Prayers and beſt Endeavours: and even the Conſciences of Criminals take part with you againſt themſelves. Your end is the ſame with that of *the Goſpel and Grace of God*, * *which* Tit. 2. 11, 12.

* *So I crave leave to render this Place as it is in the Margin of our larger Bibles, rather than as it is in our Engliſh*

brings Salvation to all men, by teaching them to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live righteously, soberly and godly in this World, as Expectance of another.

Shall Papists be so zealous for their Superstitions, as not to confine themselves at home to keep up the credit of their way, but to compass Sea and Land every where to make Proselytes? and shall not we be as zealous for the great things of Christianity it self? Shall Atheists, Deists, and irreligious Men have their stated Clubs and Meetings to undermine the Principles of our Holy Religion, and corrupt the Morals of Men? and shall not good men join in Societies to countermine these Enemies of God, Christ and Goodness?

Be incouraged therefore, my Friends, to proceed in the glorious design ye are prosecuting. *Drive the Buyers and Sellers out of God's Temple; build up the Walls of our* Jerusalem, tho ye be forc'd to do it *with Swords and Spears in your hands.* Imitate your blessed Master, *in going about always doing good.* This way ye will become the true Patriots of your Country's Liberties both Sacred and Civil, and be called *the Repairers of our Breaches, and Restorers of Paths to dwell in.* The present Generation doth praise you, and Posterity will rise up and call you Blessed. Peace and Joy within your own Breasts, a sense of the Divine Love and Approbation, and the comfortable expectation of an happy rest from your Labours, where your Works will follow you: these things, I say, will be the consequents of honouring and serving God and your Country; whilst * those that do otherwise are haunted

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English Text: for the Original is plain and expres for me in this case; for which I appeal to every Man that is capable to read the Text in the Grek.

* See Wanley's Hist. of Man.

* *Many Instances might be advanced to shew what Remorse of Conscience those have been under, when dying, who have been negligent in improving Opportunities of Publick Good, which God put in their hand.* Grotius *is*

said

haunted by remorſe of Conſcience either here or hereafter.

May the good and gracious God direct and encourage you in all your Endeavours of this kind, and bleſs and proſper them, to the promoting of Religion and Virtue, and the ſuppreſſing Ungodlineſs and Immorality, for his own Honour, the Nations Security, and your own and all good mens Comfort. May all our unhappy Contentions end in this one, which of us ſhall promote Piety, Love, and Goodneſs moſt. May Truth, Holineſs, Juſtice, Mercy and Peace, ever make their abode amongſt us. And for theſe ends may theſe happy Societies be ſo bleſt of God, and encreaſe; that by this as well as by other means, it may be ſaid of this and the other Nation; *Bleſſed art thou, O People, who art in ſuch a caſe, whoſe God is the Lord.* Pſ. 144. 15. And as we do heartily deſire theſe things; ſo let us beg of God that he may grant theſe our Petitions, and ſay on his part, as we on ours, *Amen.*

ſaid to have cried out, Ah vitam perdidi operoſe nihil agendo. *And ſo* Salmaſius *and many others have confeſſed on a Death-bed, that Seriouſneſs and Serviceableneſs were to be preferred before all the Learning in the World. Surely then they are more excellent than other things that Men are ſo much taken with uſually. I cannot on this occaſion forbear mentioning a Diſtitch which a Perſon of Quality and Eminency compoſed when dying; wherein he expreſſes both pathetically and briefly, the ſenſe he had of his not improving his Parts and Opportunities for God and his Country.*

Viximus: at Patria & Pietas ignoſcite. Vobis
Dum potui doleo conſuluiſſe minus. eheu!
Quantula vita hominum eſt; morimur dum vivimus,
Si ſapis exemplo, vive Deo & Patriæ.

FINIS.